

THE

CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

AUGUST, 1870.

Against Time.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE CROWS AND THE EAGLE.



HEN he started from London in health and hope, little could Hugh Childersleigh have foreseen that the hours of his Company were numbered; that he should be still in life, and yet the last of all concerned in it to hear of its untimely end. It was a telegram from Mr. Crop-
per, of Childersleighs, to his chief, that, anticipating the London journals, announced the catastrophe at Killoden. Sir Basil heard of it with utter indifference; not so, Purkiss; and no wonder indeed. That gentleman, to do him justice, had felt his

brother's death, yet he found the virtue of resignation came easily to him, as he reflected how all was ordered for the best, and that he was left the eldest and only son of his wealthy House. He sympathized with his father; but personal experience told him sentimental afflictions, however deeply they cut, are not the strokes that leave the most lasting wounds; that time and reason bring unfailing salves for the accidents that happen

to our neighbours, even when our neighbours are our nearest. Yet with it all, for a brief space, never had he been so little in Lombard Street in spirit since the day when he first seated himself on a stool in the ancestral hive. So very naturally a reaction of regret for wasted time had set in, and he longed impatiently for the moment when his body might once more be reunited to his soul, and return like it to the City. He felt his presence at Killoden to be altogether superfluous ; that the girls could do much more efficiently all he was supposed to be there for ; and in feeling so, no doubt, he showed his accustomed intelligence. Then came Cropper's telegram to make him rue more bitterly than before the weakness that had made so extravagant a sacrifice of duty to feeling ; to make him realize how relatively light had been the sorrow that had been troubling them of late. Now, indeed, he was brought face to face with misfortune, and in losing what makes life worth the having, had a foretaste of the bitterness of death. This suspension of the Crédit Foncier meant—1st. The loss of a heavy sum invested in its shares. 2nd. The contingencies involved in probable calls. 3rd. The imperilling of certain advances made recently by Childersleighs upon securities that might prove inadequate if not illusory. And 4th. The closing of a valuable account that had promised to become more valuable still. Truly troubles never come singly, and what had he done that, with his unremitting attention to business, he should be victimized wholesale in this fashion ? How intensely all the old hate came back for the sick man in the other room !

He read the fatal telegram to Sir Basil, and the old man simply observed, "Stopped is it ? Poor Hugh !"

The evidence of childish feebleness, of the utter wreck of mind and perversion of moral sense, came more home to his son than anything had done yet ; but, suppressing an irritation surely most excusable, he expatiated on all it involved to themselves. The old man only raised his head listlessly to drop his eyes on the lake again, and murmured, "Ah, well, it does not much signify now ; but perhaps, Purkiss, you had better leave us—Cropper may want you."

"I should think so, indeed. It would have been better I had left before, or never come," muttered Purkiss. "Well, good-by, sir ; there's no time to be lost, and I shall be off at once."

Sir Basil let his hand be lifted and shaken without the faintest pressure in response ; but as his only remaining son had reached the door, he started up and called him back to throw his arm affectionately over his shoulder.

"God bless you, Purkiss, if we should never see each other again ! Everything seems going now, and in the midst of life we are in death."

"God bless you, sir—good-by," returned Purkiss, really touched for the moment, and with unusual feeling.

Maude came to meet him as he descended from superintending the packing of his portmanteau.—

"Do tell me, Purkiss, what does all this mean: the telegram and this sudden start of yours? Surely, my father must be wandering when he talks of the stoppage of the Crédit Foncier."

"Too true, Maude, worse luck for me. A disgraceful, atrocious business;" and happy to find an interested listener, he poured out his own grievances in some detail.

"Poor Hugh!" sighed his sister, when he had done. "What a blow this may be to him in his present state. You'll say good-by to him, Purkiss, won't you? God knows if it may not be for the last time; but I greatly fear the worst."

"No such luck," returned her brother, with a look of frank hatred that made her start back from him. "You need not doubt, Maude, that he will be spared to make us more mischief yet." And with that parting piece of comfort Purkiss was gone.

Although still very weak, before the arrival of these unlucky tidings Hugh had been pronounced out of danger. Days before, he had regained his consciousness, but he had lain in moody silence, only returning brief thanks for the attentions bestowed on him, or answering to inquiries in curt monosyllables. He seemed the helpless prey of a single devouring thought. He had never made the most distant allusion to those business matters that had held possession of his mind, until the doctors, who had, at first, given strict warning against any reference to them, began to question seriously whether it might not be better and wiser to try them as a means of distraction. It was his great vigour of constitution that gave him his best chance in this second grapple with time, that buoyed him up when a weaker man must have gone on sinking steadily; and if he could only be recalled to some of his old objects of interest, that vigour might be rallied actively to his aid. In the changed circumstances, the stimulant they had thought of venturing on seemed only too likely to be fatal.

When the telegram reached Purkiss, McAlpine, who had been keeping alternate watches with Rushbrook in his friend's sick-room, chanced to be at his own home at Baragoil; Rushbrook had sent it on to him straight, and a few hours saw him at Killoden *en route* for London.

"I had just time to take you on my way to the train, Miss Childersleigh," he said. "I could not go without saying good-by to you all, having a word with Rushbrook, and one other look at Hugh, poor fellow. I can do him more good in London than here, and only wish for his sake I had been there before. I fear he may be badly in want of friends. But who could have foreseen all this, or even guessed that that black-hearted little scoundrel Hemprigge would have played the mischief with us in this way?"

"Good-by, Mr. McAlpine; you are right, I am sure, and if he does want a friend he could not have a better or stancher one than you. But you say nothing of your own loss, and that, I fear, must be a heavy one?"

"I can put up with it and have more left than I need. It's no use

crying over spilled milk, and if there is to be a moan made over it, I leave it to my nephew Peter McAlpine, who counts on my succession I don't doubt. And remember, until you hear from me, not a word about all this to Hugh. If I have to fetch away Rushbrook, I'll write to you ; and if I should have occasion to do it, I shall keep nothing back. I shall trust to you to act as you think best ; I know I cannot trust to a kinder heart or wiser head. Yet this business makes us all selfish, and I am grieved at having to trouble you in the midst of your heavier sorrow."

" We must not neglect the living for the dead, Mr. McAlpine. My poor brother would have been the last to wish me to sacrifice his dearest friend to his memory."

Her tears were falling fast, and McAlpine drew his own hand across his eyes, as he withdrew from the room to take a hasty farewell to the others. Two days after he was in London and Lothbury. What a change since he had last passed these mighty portals, and crossed that spacious hall ! Now, instead of the doors flung open to all comers, one of the great leaves was jealously bolted, and the other vigilantly guarded against applicants who could be possibly excluded. The giant porter, who, to his own swelling admiration, was wont to air his portly figure on the steps, now, in his diminished self-respect, courted the cool seclusion of the interior ; was short to incivility in his answers, and suspiciously opened the door by inches, for parleys or the passage of callers. The *oi πολλοι* of these were turned over to the heads of the irresponsible staff, who in their unaffected ignorance and the utter confusion of their faculties, gave involuntarily diplomatic replies that sent away the anxious inquirer more hopelessly puzzled than they came. The council-room had become a chamber of slow torture to its members ; the great council board was garnished with pale and gloomy faces, and encircled with fevered frames. All of them had been victimized, tricked and juggled. All alike were heavy sufferers ; some of the poorer and less sanguine sat cowering beneath the threatening form and glassy stare of the phantom ruin. Many of them had pressing business calling them elsewhere, and the sharp lesson they were learning told them how little trust they could place in any one or in anything ; yet the natural anxiety to know the best or worst of this held them where they were. In the gradations of misery that wrung them, none perhaps suffered more intensely than Sir Ralph Palliser ; and even the stern Muscovites, whose intrigues he had so often detected and baffled, might have compassionated the luckless diplomat. As cheque after cheque was presented to him for acknowledgment, carelessly signed by him to be cashed by Hemprigge, he had to listen at peril of apoplexy to language that a week before would have seemed blasphemous outrage. Accusations and recriminations, indeed, flew hither and thither like snow-balls in a street fight ; there were only brief suspensions of hostilities when the combatants, by one consent, concentrated the common fire on their late Governor and Managing Director. What gave an honest virulence to the proceedings of the meeting was, that all were so thoroughly

conscious of having acted uprightly, and being the deeply-wronged victims of circumstances. They had endangered their character and credit, as well as losing their money; yet they were the objects of abuse and menaces of impeachment to the fellow-sufferers who blustered round their gates.

Uprightly as the directors might have acted, had strict justice held the scales, the verdict perhaps might have been that all this indignation and abuse was only their honest due. We are apt to forget there are cases when omission becomes well-nigh as grave a crime as any overt deed; when inaction and indifference are the most flagrant of breaches of confidence. It does not follow that the man is innocent, or even a commonplace culprit, who devotes to the business he undertakes for other people the amount of inattention he habitually bestows on his own. It may be a venial offence to act after your nature, and do as you please with your own; but it becomes something like moral felony when, for the sake of name and gain, you push yourself forward into the office of trustee, and then make ducks and drakes of the money whose charge you have courted. The higher your position the greater your responsibility, because the more fatal the advertisement to which you lend your name; and great is the fall and widespread the ruin when a house comes down that has been propped by men of unimpeachable fame. The Directors of the Crédit Foncier had directed nothing, and could only sit tongue-tied and conscience-stricken when asked to render an account of their stewardship.

The absent, we know, are always in the wrong, and the ceremonial of the scapegoat, although inaugurated under the Jewish dispensation, has been extensively popularized among Pagans and Christians in every age. Hemprigge had placed himself in the meantime beyond the reach of blows and bruises; all he had left behind him was what character he had, and there was small satisfaction in abusing that. It is disheartening work setting yourself to blacken a blackamoer. But with Hugh Childersleigh, it was altogether another thing. There was genuine pleasure in pelting the man who had stood so high above the reach of evil tongues, and had trodden the City scarcely splashed by its mud. The veil had been torn down from the idol, and in the figure they had blindly adored as the god of fortune, they fancied they recognized the cloven foot. The most grovelling of his worshippers were the most vindictive; and it was the individuals who had been loudest in his praise who now heaped him with charges and curses.

“Don’t tell me!” shouted one of them, in reply to a gentleman who had dared to insinuate that Childersleigh was scarcely likely to have courted almost certain death to give a colour to his absence at an awkward time. “Don’t tell me! There’s no fathoming the dodges of a fellow like that. When men like Childersleigh set themselves to be scoundrels, honest people haven’t a chance; and I don’t say Childersleigh is not clever—very far from it. To do him justice, he’s clever enough, and all the worse for us. When I think of those humbugging speeches of his——”

"But is he a scoundrel?—that's just the question."

"Is not Hemprigge a scoundrel? Answer me that. You don't mean to defend him, I suppose."

The other conceded the point eagerly and cordially, becoming seriously uneasy on his own account: for his interlocutor was six feet high and in the humour of the wounded beast, who closes its teeth on anything within its reach; and his menacing indignation seemed not unlikely to take a personal turn.

"Very well, then. The two laid their heads together to start the company. You won't deny that, I fancy? Have they not gone hand-and-glove ever since; as thick as the thieves they are? Has not Childersleigh all these years been quietly pocketing the commissions that should have gone to us, or to the reserve fund, at any rate? Has he not sold his shares, foreseeing as he well might, what was to happen to us, until now he holds fewer than I do? Is it not his ruinous policy Hemprigge has been carrying out these last few weeks—I have it on the best authority, from one of the Directors—until at last he has landed us where we are? And do you mean to tell me he won't go halves in the booty Hemprigge has bolted with, when all this has blown over and we have sat quietly down with our empty pockets. Mark my words: this accident is a plant, and the illness a humbug; and when it suits him, he'll rise from his bed as strong as you or I at this moment; if he ever was down on it, that is, which I very greatly doubt. Bah—h—h! I know him!" and there was a world of vindictiveness in the brief peroration he hissed out.

That was an extreme statement of the case against Hugh, but its separate articles were subscribed to very generally among the shareholders. They had been robbed and many of them ruined, in a Company which he had set a-going and administered with almost absolute power; and he could scarcely hope for either consideration or justice when they brought him up for summary judgment. That close connection with Hemprigge he had so heavily reproached himself with of late—the intimacy that had existed for the public to the last, although, in reality, it had been long before brought to a close—now condemned him in a damning complicity. True, few of the shareholders let their passion so far master their common sense as to pronounce him art and part in the Manager's closing crime; but in their condition and frame of mind, it was not altogether without plausible excuse they shrugged their shoulders and talked of birds of a feather.

Acutely as all this must have stung Hugh, who, even in the first wild rush for wealth had taken scrupulous care of his honour, and even, according to his light and conscience, of the interests of those who trusted in it, yet he would have been touched far more deeply by the despairing misery of those who said the least. There were women whose lives were ended, so far as any comfort in this world went; who were reduced to beg or starve out the weary existence his ill-omened enterprise had poisoned to them. There were half-pay officers, whose hairs were

thinning and whitening visibly with the cares of the last day or two, who had aged as suddenly as old men wakening from an enchanted sleep. They had lodged in his hands the savings of a lifetime of hard service and harder privations. Now they saw themselves dragged out of the quiet homes they had retired to for their declining years, to a more wearying campaign than any they had fought as yet, where debts and duns were to keep them ceaselessly on the alert. They sighed over the lost independence his promises had persuaded them to part with, and thought despondingly of the helpless families for whom they had gambled away their substance. Unused to trade, and without a chance of ever winning back what they had lost, to them insolvency meant intolerable shame and helpless wretchedness. The worst of it was, they could not know the worst. But there were Job's comforters in abundance to assure them that they had committed themselves to inextinguishable liabilities, and laid in a stock of money troubles that would see them comfortably into the tomb.

McAlpine was a man of the world, and had not expected to find his friend Hugh treated very tenderly or fairly in the days following the crash. But even McAlpine was taken back by the strength and virulence of the *animus* excited against him. In his own religious conviction of Hugh's high sense of honour, in his knowledge of the great estimation in which he had been held, he had never fully realized how speciously untoward circumstances could be made to tell against him by men who felt themselves injured. There had at first been no one to defend him, and judgment had gone by default; declaimers on the popular side had had it all their own way, and had blackened his character at will. Often McAlpine was tempted to renounce in despair the disheartening task of pleading with indignant victims to reconsider their opinions. With the Directors, indeed, he had some measure of success. Most of them were men broken into losses as to gains; men who could never have held their own with the world, if they had wasted time in brooding over the irretrievable; who, when the first burst of rage had spent itself, were inclined to think leniently even of Hemprigge's villainy, as one of those elements which are the essence of speculation, and which it is equally impossible to calculate upon or to provide against. They were induced, on argument, to admit Hugh's honesty absolutely, and to confess that perhaps he could hardly be taxed either with undue imprudence or with negligence. But, after all, their answer amounted to this: "It was to his appropriating the exclusive control of the business that their disasters were mainly due; that now, thanks to him, it had become every man for himself, and that their own case against the shareholders was far too delicate to admit of their hampering it with the defence of the very individual who had embarrassed them."

And when McAlpine addressed himself to influential shareholders out of doors, he was always met by the same queries: "Has he not had the sole management of everything? Has he not been the close ally of Hemprigge? Has he not been steadily getting rid of his shares?"

It seemed clear then, that his fellow-Directors would be only too happy if Hugh could be made to carry off all the sins of the Board ; while there was an ominous determination on the part of the shareholders that he should not be suffered to retire in peace to the wilderness. McAlpine was inclined to thank heaven that his friend was still too utterly prostrate to concern himself with business affairs, and wrote a faithful and very gloomy account of the situation to Rushbrook. He begged him to lose no time in returning to town, and, as he valued his cousin's life, to see that he learned nothing of the stoppage of the Company.

Greatly disturbed, Rushbrook hurried back, arriving in time to assist at the first general assembly of the ruined shareholders. The Directors' position on the platform was nearly as perilous as that of the independent candidate on an Irish hustings ; something worse than that of a mediæval martyr doing penance in the pillory. Their managing man was the only speaker on their side who obtained a tolerably uninterrupted hearing, and yet seldom was speech more steadily chorussed by heart-drawn groans. The sole thing that seemed to come out tolerably clearly was, that up to the moment of Childersleigh's departure, the Company had been not merely solvent, but highly prosperous ; that its embarrassments were likely to arise mainly from commitments made during Hemprigge's brief tenure of command, commitments so mad, on terms so easy, that there was good reason to suspect personal considerations and handsome douceurs must have influenced him in acceding to them, although a memorandum in Childersleigh's handwriting, found on his table, seemed to prove that some of the most important, at least, had been contemplated by the Governor. That Hemprigge had also misappropriated cheques and embezzled money wholesale ; but that, notwithstanding, had it not been for the securities and papers he had carried away, many of them apparently in sheer wantonness, there was no reason to doubt the Company would have tided over its engagements. So it was clear as noonday, their ruin lay at Childersleigh's door and no one else's.

The disappearance of documents, and the absence of any accurate information as to those which had been really abstracted, complicated, matters so awkwardly that it was impossible to form a reliable estimate of the prospects of the shareholders. As the meeting was unofficial, the official liquidator did not assist at it ; but in answer to reiterated inquiries, the Directors were driven to admit that a call was inevitable, although they had reason to believe that every shilling of it, and no inconsiderable portion of the paid-up capital as well, would ultimately be returned to the shareholders.

“ Walker ! ” was the uncourteous commentary of a vulgar hard-faced man in a front seat ; and the lugubrious countenances of those around him seemed to express universal participation in his incredulity.

After a good deal of desultory speaking, captious questioning, and most unparliamentary latitude of language, our old acquaintance, Dr. Silke Reynardson, obtained the ear of the meeting. From the outset he struck

a high moral key, as beseemed his character and office. He spoke, as he said himself, much more in sorrow than in anger; yet a good deal of righteous indignation broke out in the course of his vigorous philippic, and there was a lurid glare in his eye, that reminded one rather of a Grand Inquisitor on a field-day of the Holy Office, than a professed apostle of peace and good-will. "He had been grieved and disappointed, where he had trusted, and, he might say, loved. He, for one, had believed in Mr. Childersleigh as in himself; he was not ashamed to stand there and tell them so again, as he had told them so before. He had trusted his capital to Mr. Childersleigh, and where was that capital now? Gone with last winter's snow. He had trusted him with his confidence, which was far more, and what of that? Convulsed to the roots, like a sapling in the clutch of the tornado; heaven knew he felt no bitterness to Mr. Childersleigh, yet Mr. Childersleigh had shaken his faith in his species, and he knew not if time would ever restore it. He did not envy the feelings of the man who had a crime like that weighing on his conscience. (Murmurs of admiration, assent, impatience, and cries of "Question!") In his humble judgment that seemed strictly the question; but, if they pleased, he would come to what they might think the point. He regarded it as a moral duty to their fellow-creatures, although it might be a painful one to themselves, to record formally their honest detestation of their betrayer, to brand him as a terrible warning to others. He felt it a duty they owed their Governor as their neighbour, to compel him to restitution, if not to repentance. That terrible memorandum in the Governor's handwriting was a deadly *pièce de conviction*, but he would prefer not to expatiate upon that.

And amid cries of "question" and "cut it short," he wound up with a resolution, that condemned the Governor in scathing terms, and authorised a committee to take counsel's opinion on the liabilities, civil and criminal, he might have incurred towards the Company.

Rushbrook and McAlpine made a gallant fight for their friend, and were backed up by Marxby and Rolfganger. The two former solemnly asseverated their belief, founded on intimate acquaintance with the Governor's handwriting, that the memorandum in question was nothing but a forgery: a parting shaft of malice shot by Hemprigge; and their evident sincerity, and Rushbrook's rank, had perhaps more weight than might have been expected in the temper of the meeting. Even Schwartzchild came to their help, and said bluntly, he believed Mr. Childersleigh as incapable of evil intention, as he was himself. In the end, the Reverend Doctor's resolution was carried indeed, but with the substance greatly modified, and the terms much toned down, while the allusion to "criminal" liability was dropped altogether. Yet after all, and as it stood, could Hugh Childersleigh have had the faintest foreshadowing of its drift three years before, he would rather have let Hemprigge lead him to the stake, than carry him into the City.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HOOKER IN THE CONFESSORIAL.

IT may be a bold assertion, and yet we venture to say that no one of all the shareholders of the Crédit Foncier had gone into such transports of grief and rage over Hemprigge's disappearance as Hooker. For the Manager had comprehended his cherished intimate and partner in the unceremonious French leave he had taken of his circle of acquaintance. Hooker had been the last to believe in the reality of the Hegira; he had struggled bravely with the conviction, even when the thief-proof safe under Hemprigge's immediate charge was discovered to be empty. He suggested the dragging of the river and the ornamental waters in the Parks, but the official gentleman on whom he urged the undertaking turned deaf ears to the suggestion. He advertised at his own expense in the second column of *The Times*, in terms that ought to have flattered the missing gentleman exceedingly, and responses were numerous, but wofully wide of the mark. All the time, the conviction he resisted, kept its hold upon him—few men had had better opportunities than he of estimating Hemprigge's character—and at last it mastered him. The effect was terrible. Between long outbursts of fury he reposed himself utterly exhausted in sullen despair; one and the other chequered by what looked not unlike touches of genuine grief. How changed from that grave, composed major-domo of Miss Childersleigh, who had slipped catlike through a life as smooth as himself. How different from the prosperous City gentleman, who had been sunning his declining years in the smiles of fortune; with a heart that grew more buoyant as the gold weighed heavier in his purse. City friendships are apt to dissolve themselves in adversity; but few of the ruined stood so utterly alone as Hooker. He had cast off his old acquaintances, and his newer ones fell away from him. Now Hemprigge was gone, his guide, his philosopher; his only intimate and confidant; the link that bound him to high City life; and Silke Reynardson's trust in things in general had never been more shaken by Hugh Childersleigh, than Hooker's by this desertion of Hemprigge. He raved out his sorrows to any one who would consent to barter purposeless lamentations with him; yet there was a method in the madness of his rage; and often he would nearly choke himself as he violently thrust back something that was on the point of bursting its way out. Habit constrained him to keep the one secret of his mysterious connection with Hemprigge. Nature was pressing him to shriek it aloud on the housetops.

In circumstances like these, it was natural his mind should revert mournfully to those peaceful days of Harley Street, when the sharp practice, if sharp practice there were, was all on one side, and he had no reason to keep on his guard against the people he dealt with. "How seldom are we rightly thankful for our many mercies," he murmured

sententiously, as he remembered the superb indifference with which Miss Childersleigh signed, without a comment, the cheques he asked for. He had left that peaceful paradise to fall among the thieves of the City, and in a couple of years or so, had been pillaged of the pickings of a long lifetime! "They are all birds of a feather: every one of them tarred with the same brush," he reflected sadly, as he revolved his unfortunate experience of City men; he longed to be once more in contact with unimpeachable character—to find a professional man to whom he could bare his aching heart, without the fear of having capital made of his confidences.

The train of his thoughts and the turn of his feelings not unnaturally floated him to his late mistress's trusted man of business. We have lost sight of Mr. Rivington, because Mr. Rivington has remained a simple spectator of the events of our story. He had been far from an uninterested one, however. He had looked on, marvelling at Hugh's success; perhaps not altogether free from twinges of jealousy, at seeing himself utterly outstripped in the great race for fortune by a man whose earlier career had demoralized rather than trained him for it. But, although he had seen something of retributive justice in the speculator's collapse, he had been unfeignedly grieved by it all the same, and had read with real concern the *on dits* paragraphed on the subject; the reports of the meeting of the shareholders, and the one-sided statements and attacks of the press.

Mr. Rivington was seated one day in his chambers, when a clerk laid a card by his desk. "Mr. Hooker—Hooker—who is Mr. Hooker? Ah! yes. I think I remember. What is he like, Wicks' elderly man?"

"Yes, sir; elderly man: seems most anxious to see you."

"You may ask him to walk up then;" and it was indeed his old acquaintance who entered, but very much more humble, not to say sneaking in manner, than the day when he had superciliously rejected the lawyer's gratuitous advice against investing in the Crédit Foncier of Turkey.

"Take a chair, Mr. Hooker," said Mr. Rivington, undemonstratively. Latterly, and before he had lost sight of him, he had come to regard with considerable suspicion Miss Childersleigh's man of confidence.

Mr. Hooker took a chair in silence, and sighed.

"May I ask your business?" said the other impatiently, after waiting a few seconds. "Excuse me, but mine is rather pressing."

"Ah! Mr. Rivington," broke out the other in a burst of feeling. "It's changed days with me since I had the pleasure of seeing you last, sir. If I had only listened to you about that accursed Crédit Foncier! Ah, our best hopes are mortal as well as ourselves, but what would Miss Childersleigh have said if she had been spared to see this day?"

"Most likely she would have said with me, that you did an exceedingly foolish thing when you risked your money in Crédit Foncier shares. If you have lost by it, I am sorry for you. At any rate, I hope you have left yourself enough to live on."

"If I have lost by it! If I have lost money! Oh, Mr. Rivington!"

and Hooker, in a convulsion of sobs and pathos that shook himself and his chair, communicated to the lawyer his own private chapter of City life.

Rivington listened to him with a contempt and impatience that changed to interest, if not to sympathy as the story went on. At first he heard with incredulity of the speaker's intimate relations with Hemprigge, but the answers to questions judiciously interposed in the way of cross-examination gave him every reason to accept the narrative as being true in the main, astounding as it was.

He heard it to the end, and then remarked, "A most unfortunate chapter of accidents indeed, although unluckily not a very uncommon one. But, in my opinion, Mr. Hooker, it is not the people whose reckless dealings have wrought all this misery who are the most to be pitied. What, in heaven's name, did a man like you, who had passed his life cleaning spoons and forks, mean by dabbling in stocks and shares?" he demanded of a sudden, savagely. "But may I ask," he went on, resuming his cold manner, "why you should have come to me? My business does not lie in the insolvent courts, and I need hardly point out to a man of your intelligence that that is the obvious way out of your embarrassments."

"Whatever is to be done, sir?" urged Hooker imploringly. "Do have pity upon me and take me up for the sake of old times. If you only knew those scoundrels in the City, as I do, you could not have the heart to leave me among them. And surely you might manage to save me a trifle. In a great many of the transactions I do not figure at all. It was all—well, it was all Hemprigge, sir—the best part of my shares are standing in his name now."

Rivington's face did not soften in the least, and Hooker could not read a touch of compassion in the abstracted features. The lawyer, although looking hard at him, was thinking of others, thinking if it were not possible to use the man to help Childersleigh and a number of innocent shareholders out of their troubles—to trace and recover the valuable property Hemprigge had carried off.

"You are in a very bad way, Mr. Hooker, and your concern in the Crédit Foncier of Turkey alone is quite sufficient to make a beggar of you. If you had never scorched a finger anywhere else, you would only have the choice between starvation and service, and I candidly tell you, your doings out of place are scarcely likely to recommend you to a new one." Could Hooker have believed he should have lived to hear such language held to him and yet should sit and listen to it quietly! "You certainly have no reason to thank your friend, Mr. Hemprigge," Mr. Rivington proceeded.

"My friend, Mr. Hemprigge!" burst out Hooker, emphasizing the "friend" and the "Mr." "Oh, Mr. Rivington, if I were to tell you all."

"Come, come, Mr. Hooker; personally I no more care to hear what you may have done in the past, than I am interested to know what becomes of you in the future. For the sake of my old friend, and your late mistress, I am willing to take you up, so far as I can do so honestly;

but if I do take your case in hand, it shall only be on condition of your being perfectly frank and outspoken. Of course I see there's some strange bond between you and this Hemprigge, something more than that very distant relationship you told me of when, much against my inclination, Miss Childersleigh persuaded me to have him articled in this office. So make up your mind at once," he added, pulling out his watch. "Will you tell me all, or leave the room and let me go on with my work?"

"It must come out at last," exclaimed Hooker desperately, "or I shall burst with it, and perhaps—who knows?—it may be a comfort telling it. It comes hard, to be sure, parting with a secret you have kept well-nigh for forty years, but where's the use of keeping it now,—where's the use of keeping it now? It's little I guessed what was to make me bring it out at the last."

Mr. Rivington sat looking curiously at him. Hooker's contortions would have been ridiculous, had his anguish not been so evidently genuine. You might have set him down for a demoniac who was having the devil that possessed him torn out by some potent spell.

When his words did come they came with a rush. "He's my boy, sir, my own boy, Mr. Rivington; him I was so proud of. If I disowned him all the best of my days it was only that I might see him a gentleman before I died, and, curse him, this is the way he takes to pay me back."

Now that he had the opportunity of imparting his griefs to another, what with spite at the manner in which the worthy son had left his parent in the lurch, what with disappointed hopes, wounded pride, and some more real paternal feeling, Hooker might have gone on indefinitely. But Rivington stopped him unceremoniously. "In short, you brought him up to deceive every one else, and he ended by practising your own lessons on you. Well, if I believe this strange story of yours, it is only because it seems the most reasonable way of accounting for a clever scoundrel like him making a confederate of a man like you."

"You may believe it, sir, I do assure you." And Hooker waiving the insult, and anxious to secure himself a support in his trouble, took up his autobiography some eight-and-thirty years before, and as far as Hemprigge was concerned in it, brought it down to the present time. When a comparatively young man, he had been promoted to the post of chief butler with the rich Mr. Childersleigh—old Miss Childersleigh's father. Gifted with social accomplishments of a very high order, he had mixed in general society, so far as his domestic engagements admitted. His insinuating manners and easy conversational powers made him a universal favourite with the fair sex, and suggested naturally the idea of improving his rising fortunes by marriage—to cut his long tale as short as Mr. Rivington unsuccessfully tried to do, he centred his prudent affections on Mrs. Hemprigge, a comely widow lady, tenant of the "Marquis of Anglesea" public-house, wooed and won her.

"But why not go and live with your wife; why make a mystery of your marriage?" inquired Rivington, very naturally.

"Mrs. Hooker was rich, but she liked being mistress in her own house, and I was well off where I was, and thought I should be more my own master in the meantime, if I continued head-servant to Mr. Childersleigh. It was a good place, and we were both prudent, and agreed that things had better remain as they were for the time, and they would not have done that long had Mr. Childersleigh got wind of the wedding. Then we had a boy, and his mother died. Ah, she was a prudent woman," interpolated the widower, grinding his teeth at the reminiscence. "The goodwill and the lease of the premises were to be sold, and the price, with all her property strictly settled on the child, and left in trust to a brother of her own. That was how she treated me, sir; I who had thrown over a dozen of others for her; and, of course, after that I had nothing for it but to go on keeping my secret, and standing by the Childersleighs. The boy grew up so sharp that even his uncle said we had better make him a lawyer and a gentleman. Said I, 'If we could only get him into Mr. Rivington's, his fortune would be made,' and I worked it with Miss Childersleigh, and got her to interest herself in him."

"Exactly so; and when I made up my mind to part with him?" said Mr. Rivington, shrugging his shoulders.

"He had his own money, and I had laid by a good bit as well. Oh, Lord, Mr. Rivington, only to think of that, and what's come of it now! Well, I had often thought I could do better with my savings than lending them on houses and such like, and he was a clever lad, that the gentlemen had come to take notice of while he was with you. So we set him up in business. Of course, after that, he cared less than ever to have it known his father was in service."

"In short, you brought him up a liar, and made a usurer of him at four-and-twenty. Well, I know the rest, and I must say I don't greatly wonder at it. What have you heard of him since he left? Rivington asked abruptly.

"Since he left, sir?" stammered Hooker. He had heard then: that was what Rivington wanted to find out.

"He would write you naturally, you know. He might prefer saying nothing about his intentions before he had got clear away, but once gone he could have no reason for not opening communications; on the contrary, you might be very useful to him in many ways. Now, Mr. Hooker, if I have taken you up, it is out of no particular respect or regard for you I need hardly say, but I shall tell you my opinion of your case. It is very possible that, as you say, the bulk of your shares in those broken companies may be registered in your son's name, but then you are involved over head and ears with the Crédit Foncier. When the creditors claim their own, it will go very hard with you, my worthy friend."

Hooker groaned assent.

"It is clearly your policy, then, to conciliate the liquidators of the Crédit Foncier if you can, and I need not say they would have cause to be grateful to the man who should be the means of restoring them the property your son has stolen. Indeed, merely in your quality as a shareholder, restitution would make no slight difference to yourself. I don't do Mr. Hemprigge—I shall still call him so—the injustice to suppose you can persuade him to give up anything he can put to use, but they tell me he has carried off much that is absolutely worthless to him, although of the last importance to the Company."

Hooker shook his head despondingly. "You don't know him as I do, Mr. Rivington. He liked money well, it is true, but in my soul I believe he hated Mr. Childersleigh more. He's sometimes nearly broken my heart with his foolishness that way, sir, and it was to spite Mr. Childersleigh, and nothing else, he's carried them away, you may depend upon it."

"Business jealousies doubtless, and very natural feelings too—in him," remarked Rivington, not specially curious as to the hidden springs of Hemprigge's heart, so long as he knew its general course of feeling. "Well, but you can write him that Mr. Childersleigh is dying, can't you? He has taken a turn for the worse I hear, and I'm afraid it's only too near the truth to be much of a falsehood. If it were, the telling it need not sit very heavy on your conscience. I don't ask where your son is; he fancies himself pretty safe, I don't doubt, or he would not have compromised himself by writing. But what I should strongly recommend you is the communicating with him before you see me again. Believe me," he added significantly, "that in the circumstances it will be much the best thing you can do for yourself; and I am sure I cannot add anything to that argument. Good-morning. You may go."

Not another word could Mr. Hooker obtain from his old acquaintance and new man of business, so he withdrew himself to meditate on the counsels he had received, to moralize upon filial ingratitude, and to speculate on the precarious chance of recalling his prodigal son to a sense of filial duty, and persuading him to give up his vengeance for any one's advantage but his own.

CHAPTER XXXV.

CURE OR KILL.

Few men could boast of more "friends" than Childersleigh, and it was only natural that he should be candidly and universally canvassed and criticized in the hour of his calamity. He had been a man of the clubs as well as the city, and his name was as familiar in western as in eastern circles. An extraordinary number of his West End acquaintances had followed him into the Crédit Foncier; so he was brought up nearly

as often for discussion at Lights' and Doodles', as at the Tresham. The several Boresbys of these establishments had made it their special business to clear up matters to the bottom, and as no men could see deeper into mud, they had it in their power to communicate a variety of marvellous facts, which, if occasionally inharmonious or even contradictory, at least left little to be desired in point of detail. The current of feeling set so strongly against the fallen lords of limited liability, that there was slight chance of stemming it; woe to the man who by fault or misfortune was swept from his perch; he had small hope indeed of recovering his footing. Childersleigh doing nothing to help himself had been caught in the wildest of the rush, and those of his intimates and near relations who came to his help, were labouring with heavy hearts at dragging him back from the general ostracism he was being hurried to.

No one busied himself more untiringly at the kindly work than Barrington, and it had not wanted Rushbrook's intercession to induce Lord Hestercombe to lend his countenance to his unfortunate nephew. As may be imagined, his lordship, silenced so long by Hugh's brilliant success, now denounced his idea of mixing himself up in business matters in more unmeasured terms than before, and expressed his heartfelt indignation at the heir of his house and honours being compromised in those unholy schemes. But Rushbrook submitted that he might be supposed to have arrived himself at years of discretion, and did his cousin ample justice, and Lord Hestercombe was too honest not to be discriminating in his anger, and too worldly wise not to confine his strong opinions to his own family circle. While blaming Hugh for the first ill-considered step, he scouted contemptuously all imputations on his subsequent conduct, and imperiously declared everywhere he would answer for his honour as his own. He was a valuable ally, but with all the weight he naturally attached to the utterance of his own sentiments, he felt that scandal was silenced only in his presence; he lived and moved about in a morbid suspicion that its thousand tongues were whispering everywhere around him. He felt it humiliation to have to descend to the rôle of advocate in such a cause; the calumnies he refuted, baseless as they were, implied dishonour to himself as to his client.

"I can see no end to all this," he remarked one day gloomily to his son. "I shall discharge my duty while I can; and very hard it is that you two headstrong young men should have forced such a duty upon me. I have not even the comfort of thinking I do Hugh any good; every day, in fact, I am more convinced that no one can help him but himself; and if he cannot show himself soon, I greatly fear it will be too late even for that."

"Your support is invaluable to him," returned Rushbrook. "But I quite agree with you, he is the best man to plead his own cause, and his very showing himself would do more good than anything any of us can say for him. Besides," he added gravely, "I own his state alarms me,

and I hear that the doctors talk of him much less hopefully than they did. Knowing his old strength of body and mind, I firmly believe a fresh shock that would interest him, however painfully, might be the best medicine they could use. Of one thing I am sure, if his honour should suffer through our consideration for his life, so far from thanking us, he would never forgive us."

"I believe he would not, and he would be right too," said his lordship approvingly. "Violent diseases require violent treatment; and in the circumstances, and as his nearest of kin, I think we ought to take the responsibility on ourselves."

"Perhaps I had better run down to Killoden, and break this to him."

"I cannot say I see the slightest necessity for your doing so. I think you may very well leave it to the ladies and the medical men between them. By the way, who is your correspondent there,—Sir Basil?"

"I am sorry to say Sir Basil is nearly as incapable of writing a letter as Hugh. Miss Childersleigh acts generally as his amanuensis."

"An invaluable one, I am sure she must be," observed his lordship drily. "At least, she seems to keep you most regularly informed of everything that goes on."

"I exacted a promise that she should write daily, before I would consent to leave, although in the circumstances I am quite sure she would have felt it her duty to do so in any case," replied Lord Rushbrook, in a tone which his father knew well was a favourite with him when he disliked a subject, or wished to discourage it. It gave strength to suspicions that had been floating about of late in the Hestercombe household, and left the Earl with food for very mingled meditation. On the one hand, his son's steadfast reluctance to matrimony had been a long-standing sorrow to him; on the other, he was far from being prepared to welcome with unmixed satisfaction Sir Basil Childersleigh's daughter as his daughter-in-law. But he understood his son well enough to be aware that he would make any question of the sort a strictly personal one; and more likely than not, resent paternal interference by flying full in the face of it. So, whether the Earl's reflections were pleasant or the reverse, at least he was spared the anxiety of nicely weighing advantages and disadvantages, with any idea of deciding on a course of action.

Meanwhile Hugh had been slowly regaining his bodily strength. Although able to leave his room, he seldom availed himself of the privilege, but rather clung to it as a sanctuary where he could indulge undisturbed in the luxury of brooding thought. His mind seemed oppressed rather than actually crushed, loaded with a single absorbing idea that left room for no others to circulate. The shock that had shaken his nervous system had stamped his kinsman's dying look upon his brain, and, waking or sleeping, it was ever present to him. Although never starting any subject of conversation, he answered any remarks perfectly rationally and collectedly, but frequently they had to be repeated twice; and when he did speak, it was with an obvious effort, and it was

an evident relief to relapse again into abstraction. The sight of Lucy appeared to awaken in their vividness the horrors that haunted him. There was a sense of increased suffering in the very tenderness with which he regarded her that pained her inexpressibly, especially when he would turn away, after a time, as if recollection became insupportable. Occasionally he would take up a book, and let his eyes run vacantly down the pages; but they kept newspapers carefully out of his sight, and he never asked either for them or for his letters. In short, he existed spectre-haunted, in an unnatural world of his own; and the doctors were at their wits' end as to the means of bringing him back to his every-day life.

Rushbrook's letter reached Killoden to confirm them in the decision they had been hesitating over.

"I am far from saying we do not incur a certain risk," said the distinguished author of the *Brain and Nerves in their Relations to the Body*, to Miss Childersleigh, "but we have only a choice of evils, and my hopes greatly predominate over my fears. Fortunately Providence has bestowed on the patient a constitution of iron, and had not the moral shock of the accident for some reason I cannot pretend to fathom, been so tremendous, he must have thrown off its worse effects long before now. Unluckily the prolonged immersion in his fevered state, the exhaustion, the excitement, one thing or another leading on to pleurisy and brain-fever of most aggravated type, the whole acting on a system in a state of utter collapse, have given the graver diseases all their own way for the time. Now the vital energies are recruiting themselves, and he visibly gains power every day; the mind is perfectly sound, although the persistency with which it directs itself to one particular point amounts to monomania. Yet, as I trust, that very persistency will temper the stimulant we intend to apply, and deaden the force of the blow we propose to deal. It is altogether a most singular case, Miss Childersleigh, and the experiment will be an exceedingly interesting one."

Maude could scarcely be expected to share the physician's professional enthusiasm, and she was troubling herself, moreover, as to how the experiment had best be made. Their common sorrows had drawn her and Lucy more closely together than ever. She knew or guessed all, or nearly all, that Lucy had to tell, and in her secret heart wished Lucy could have been prevailed upon to charge herself with the task. But Lucy's lover had never spoken, and the barrier circumstances had raised between them she dared not approach, especially when there was ground so delicate to be trodden beyond.

"Lord Rushbrook's last letter contains very much what we want him to know, Miss Childersleigh, does it not?" proceeded the medical man; "perhaps you could hardly do better than read it to him."

Maude looked doubtful and blushed slightly. "There are parts of it, allusions to Mr. Childersleigh's state of mind," she explained hastily, "that put it quite out of the question, I am afraid."

"Ah, very likely," returned the other. "Although, after all, I am not sure that would greatly signify. But at least you can make the letter the excuse for broaching the subject. It may be safer, perhaps, to feel your way at first, but I believe it will take the truth, and all the truth, to interest, not to say shock him."

The doctor was right; and Hugh heard, with perfect unconcern, that Rushbrook had sent them unpleasant news about the Crédit Foncier. He did not even trouble himself to inquire their purport.

"I am grieved to tell you Mr. Hemprigge has disappeared," said Maude.

"Ah! Hemprigge's gone, is he?"

"And carried away a great deal of money and valuable property belonging to the Company."

"Money and property!"

"And ruined the Crédit Foncier."

"Ruined the Crédit Foncier!" echoed Hugh, with a faint flicker of interest at last. "Well, there are worse things than ruin," he resumed, after a pause, and relapsed dreamily into his old listless attitude.

Maude waited anxiously. He seemed already to have utterly dismissed the subject. She breathed fast, mustered up all her resolution, and laid her hand on his arm. The touch arrested his attention, and he looked at her almost inquisitively.

"Hugh, you must listen to me for the sake of him we both lament, for the sake of my dead brother."

He gave a shudder, and half-turned away; but there was a gleam of his old energy as if he made an effort to struggle with himself, when he pressed his hand to his forehead, and said, "Go on, Maude, I hear you."

"Your friends were urgent for you to be in London, Hugh, to meet the accusations of your enemies. People have been taking advantage of your illness to say all sorts of cruel and false things. I know," she went on, looking steadily into his eyes,—"I know you have something very different on your mind, but they are attacking your honour, and your duty calls you to defend it—duty to the dead as well as to the living. You have to clear your name and poor George's name. You must rouse yourself, Hugh, and go at once; it is his sister who tells you so."

Hugh looked at her as one struggling hard with himself; as if he were too much busied in recalling reluctant thoughts, to have more than a half-sense of the meaning of the words that were working in him. Intelligence and interest were lightening up in his eyes like the sun thinning a morning mist. He rose at last, and took her hand in his, as he said, calmly, "I feel I ought to thank you, Maude, and to-morrow I shall. Are there no letters for me?"

"Many of them; but all this has happened since they were written."

"May I ask you to have them sent to my room, and the latest newspapers. I daresay I may stay there for the evening; I have my ideas to collect, and so very much to think of."

"But you must be careful, Hugh ; you must not over-exert yourself," she said, anxiously.

"You need not be afraid of my over-interesting myself in these matters now. But, as you say, it is a duty, and they must be looked into. If your father should ask for me, tell him what occupies me, and—give my love to Lucy," he added, stopping to leave that message as he reached the door.

The doctor heard the result of the experiment with satisfaction, although it was not altogether unmixed with anxiety.

"One can scarcely tell how his brain may have stood all it has gone through, or how he may take all this new trouble and worry when he is left alone with them. And next morning when he heard that Mr. Childersleigh had risen and intended breakfasting downstairs, he warned the ladies to be a little late of appearing, and hurried below to receive him in the breakfast-room. When Hugh entered it, there was a heavy cloud on his brow indeed, but his eye was as clear and his step as firm as they had ever been. After answering a matter-of-course inquiry about his health, and cordially thanking the doctor for his attentions, he turned eagerly to examine the morning papers that were lying on the table. The doctor, expecting every moment the advent of the breakfast or the ladies, pressed with somewhat awkward abruptness a question or two on his late patient, anxious as he was to form a diagnosis of his present condition. Hugh answered the first quietly, the second with some impatience, and at the third rested the hand that held the paper on the table and looked the doctor hard in the face.

"Yes, I understand," he said. "If you will not ask me frankly what you desire to know, I may as well help you to the point, and answer your question by anticipation. I can assure you that, thanks to your skill and care, I am perfectly convalescent, and to restore brain and body to their normal condition, they only want the exercise they are likely to have forthwith. Good-morning, Miss Winter," he went on, as that young lady entered the room, and the lingering touch before he released her fingers gave a meaning to the simple words and would have told her, without looking in his face, that in the night he had found his way round the pillar of cloud that had floated between them yesterday. Her face glowed all over with a sudden flush of happiness, to be followed quickly by a twinge of recollection and remorse, as shading her eyes from the sun she hastily turned away to pull down the blind.

"One thing is clear, from what you tell me, of your father's state," said Hugh to Maude ; he was talking with the two girls after breakfast. "One thing is clear. He must be removed from Killoden at once. Say what you please ; tell him that I want travelling-companions. I had intended leaving you to-day, but I can put off my journey, and we can all start to-morrow."

"You ought to travel by easy stages, and I am sure you are anxious to be gone."

"Twenty-four hours less or more is of little consequence, and even if I suffered something by the delay, I owe Sir Basil more than that." He smiled mournfully, and took a stride across the room. "As for me I am stronger than ever. Once fairly on your way I shall leave you with an easy mind and continue mine with Sams. But my own feelings tell me too well that this is no place for Sir Basil, and if you lose this opportunity you may find it hard to move him afterwards."

Maude left the room to see her father, and Hugh and Lucy were alone. He looked round at her to catch her eyes stealing a glance at his through their long lashes. He crossed over and sat down beside her on the sofa.

"The last time we sat together, if our lips were silent, our eyes were eloquent, and when we stepped into that unhappy boat, on my honour and conscience, Lucy, I felt our hearts plighted for life."

Lucy trembled, but said nothing.

"Had it not been so, this would be no time to speak of love, but we are betrothed; and to put our common thought in words is only an act of duty and justice. In those last moments," he went on, "before the boat went down and left us battling with death, I saw much that, in my selfish thoughtlessness, I had never guessed, and, as I hope for salvation, I hold the sacrifice of his life for us but little compared to what, in his unpretending self-forgetfulness, he must have done and suffered before. If he had lived I know not when I could have claimed your promise to be my wife; that the time would have come I do not doubt, for assuredly he would have conquered in a struggle of generosity. But more than anything else I thought of this last night, and knowing him, as I have come to know him, and while we are both looking over the waters where he lies, I still ask you to be my wife. I do not talk of marriage now or soon; it is no time for marrying or giving in marriage; but Sir Basil's health is breaking, and it is but right that the man who is your future husband by a pledge so solemn as any ever spoken by words, should assure his wife that her home is waiting her."

"You are always generous, forgetting yourself for me at a time like this," murmured Lucy.

"I could laugh, if I were in the humour for laughing. No, by heaven, dearest, I am not so unselfish. Through illness and trouble, through an actual agony at the loss of poor George that nearly shook my reason, I have felt you growing into my nature, and blotting everything else out of my future, as for long you have blended yourself with my life, and influenced my thoughts and all my actions. I long to assure myself beyond the shadow of a doubt of the prize I count on, to have you to brace me for the wearing battle I must fight out for the sake of my honour over trifles that have lost their value to me."

"And you have come to dream I can do all this for you?" said Lucy, looking up at him, and smiling and stealing her hand into his. The two were so lost to the world around them that Maude, opening the window

from the verandah, stepped into the room unseen and unheard. At her too precipitate attempt to retreat unnoticed as she had come, Lucy raised her head, gave a little startled cry, and then called her back. "Oh, don't go; Mr. Childersleigh, you must tell her all. What can you think, Maude, at such a time?"

"That one needs love most in the midst of sorrow; and no one knows better than I how deep your grief has been. I made her mine, you know, Hugh; and now I give her you. I think you are beginning to be worthy of her, and there is no living man I would be less jealous of."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SALVORS AND WRECKERS.

HUGH had forced himself to London, to enter on a new phase of existence and garner novel and painful experiences. He shrank back from the world; and yet, to vindicate himself, he must plunge again into its very vortex. He had been inclined to turn from money-making and its drudgery in the very flood of his prosperity, and now he had to set himself to the cheerless work of dredging up his good name from among its dregs. He had been courted as a man of pleasure and a man of business, and now he had to leave the full blaze of sunshine for the shadow. He would have welcomed the latter change as a relief could he have hoped to pass unnoticed; but he had been a more than nine-days' subject of the town gossip, and yet his affair still held its own among more recent scandals. Men who, when he met them last, had distinguished him at the length of a street, who had been set up for the afternoon by a shake of his hand, and descended to positive meanness for his arm, hustled by with a bow distant or familiar, and turned to whisper of him when they had passed, according to their several casts of mind and standards of morals.

"Childersleigh, you know," with a half-admiring chuckle. "Monstrous clever fellow he is; let in those City men so tremendously in that Turkish Company—ay, and a good number of the knowing ones at the west as well. He's not particular, Childersleigh is not; and they say he has landed a good half-million."

Or, with a solemn shake of the head, "The notorious Mr. Childersleigh. Black business, I fear, although nobody quite knows the demerits of it. What is certain is, that his great Company is ruined, and he is rich."

No one precisely cut him. He had position, connection, a ready tongue, and the grand manner which goes further, perhaps, in imposing on society than anything else, and he remained formidable, even in his fall. The holy *Vehme* of society might condemn him, but sentence

remained in suspense, and no individual cared to charge himself with its execution on the dangerous child of the ban.

His reception was not uncordial at the establishment in Lothbury. There, indeed, his autocracy was at an end, and his throne filled by the celebrated Mr. Auditt, head partner of the great firm of Auditt, Auditt and Co.—at least, in the moments that munificently-fee'd gentleman could spare to the Crédit Foncier from the multiplicity of his other engagements. If Mr. Childersleigh had been twice the scoundrel the more rabid shareholders asserted him to be, Mr. Auditt would still have hailed an assistance that promised to lighten so materially his own labours and responsibilities. Childersleigh's ability, at least, was beyond all impeachment; his gift of grappling with complications, of seizing and knotting up threads impalpable to dimmer eyes and less sensitive fingers, amounted to genius. Above all, he was the very man to fathom Hemprigge and the mystery of his dealings; and Hemprigge and his defalcations were the fatally disturbing element in the reports the liquidator and his coadjutors were to submit to the shareholders. So, although Hugh's management and consequent liability were at that moment referred for the opinion of counsel by his late constituents, yet, notwithstanding the murmurs of his more inveterate critics, no overt steps were taken to exclude him from the premises he had ruled till lately with nearly absolute sway.

Whatever may have been the impressions or suspicions with which Mr. Auditt met Mr. Childersleigh, the liquidator's experience soon told him the Governor was perfectly single-minded in his anxiety for searching investigation; and that the consequent presumption was he must be spotless in conscience. Clever as the Governor might be, had there been anything he wished kept dark, his entire absence of reserve would be too perilous a game to hazard with so practised a commercial detective as Auditt. So, even while they loaded him with abuse, the ruined shareholders found their account in the talents of their late chief. Where his fellow-directors were relatively, and the liquidator profoundly, ignorant, Childersleigh was thoroughly at home. When he applied his shoulder, wheels that had appeared hopelessly locked set themselves in motion, and the pace gradually became frightful to a man accustomed as Auditt was, to see companies roll ponderously through the Bankruptey Court with the maximum of friction interest and ignorance could bring to bear. The respectable accountant found, as a necessary consequence, that his own action was likely to be most unprofitably and unprofessionally accelerated; and the feeling of joy with which he had accepted Hugh's help soon toned itself down to melancholy. But he was conscious his regrets came too late, and resigned himself like a sensible man. Hugh was still a considerable shareholder, and the ex-Governor to boot; it was by the liquidator's consent he had been suffered to get a finger in the pie; now that he had thrust in his whole hand, he was not the man to withdraw it without a scene and a scandal. Besides, there was an abun-

dance of as bad fish left in the sea as had come out of it yet ; the City, it was to be hoped, was only at the beginning of its troubles, and already Auditt's firm had twice as much business in hand or in prospect as it could even undertake to perform.

It was with intense and renewed effort, that each time he returned to the task, Hugh succeeded in directing his mind to business matters. Gradually, however, they began to gain upon his thoughts, and to hold a place there. There was a certain mournful fascination in treading among the wrecks of all those promising schemes he had elaborated with a care so thoughtful ; and although he had lost much of his interest in them while they seemed to stand strong and firm, he found it come back now that they lay in hopeless ruin. It was the feeling of a father who finds painful pleasure in giving a decent burial to the children he had once loved dearly and been since estranged from. Yet it was cheerless work all the while, and with his sad reflections mingled no little self-reproach. It was so clear the flourishing business he had created might have gone on flourishing : that nothing had been wanting to it but honest management, and that its downfall would only have been possible to a man so trusted as Hemprigge in times of feverish distrust. So far, the shareholders had reason with them. It was his absence that had ruined them, and he found little comfort in the thought that it had brought more misery to himself than to any of the rest. As he had virtually superseded and ignored the Board they had chosen, it was his plain duty in times so ominous to have continued at his post in person, when his subordinate was a man he distrusted so absolutely as Hemprigge. The more this conviction grew on him, the more his naturally high spirit humbled itself, and he could labour at his dispiriting task with a patient resolution that, a few weeks before, the sense of outrage, and blood flushing and boiling with indignation, would have made impossible to him. He supported the reproaches of irritated shareholders with a composed dignity that disarmed them for the time and softened them for the future. If the glow of resentment rose to his cheek when the language that had been held of him came back to his mind, yet in his severe self-condemnation he felt he could almost forgive the speakers and writers. All the time he was borne up by the confidence with which he counted on seeing his reputation cleared from every shade of blame ; his mind was shaping the course he had to follow in the last resort ; and, looking forward to a peaceful retirement after his troubles, he swore to himself that his fame should be publicly washed as spotless as Lucy Winter's before he claimed her as his bride.

His indignant and explicit denial of the authorship of the memorandum found among Hemprigge's papers had acquitted him to the intelligence of all candid men. It ought, consequently, to have relieved him from the imputation of having instigated the more mischievous transactions of the Company, were it not so much more easy to refute a charge than to obliterate its consequences. But, meantime, Mr. Hooker, while labouring

in his own interests, had been doing him, as well as the Company, excellent service. That worthy gentleman, indeed, on the occasion of his interview with Mr. Rivington, had in his pocket a touching letter from his self-banished son. In it, Hemprigge—we must still call him so—urged that it was necessity, and a golden opportunity before a heavy pay-day, which had impelled him to a flight so sudden, that he could not gratify his affections by taking tender leave of his honoured parent. He had feared their mutual feelings might have been too much for them, possibly even hurried them into deplorable and irreparable excesses; and when he took, reluctantly, that luxury of precautions towards placing himself and his abstracted treasures beyond the chance of successful pursuit, he felt he only acted upon those safe principles which Hooker had carefully instilled into him through life. Then addressing himself to his correspondent's sound sense and worldly wisdom, he suggested, in short, that bygones should be bygones, reminding his father that he had secured the means of rewarding any services that might be rendered him. He wound up by noting certain points in which he felt accurate information to be very desirable, and, in a postscript, inquired anxiously after Childersleigh, remarking, regretfully, that had his death occurred a little sooner, it would have saved the Company a great deal of loss, and the writer the trouble of encumbering himself with a great many documents intrinsically valueless.

Upon that hint and Mr. Rivington's, after mature reflection, and more in sorrow than in anger, Mr. Hooker wrote. He rested lightly and tenderly on the culprit's misdeeds, although he shed some natural tears over the fall of that son of the morning, to whose sparkling apotheosis he had looked for the lightening of his declining days. He lamented in him the victim of circumstances rather than of social suicide, and admitted that, all those unhappy circumstances considered, he might have guided his conduct and conscience by the light of reason. Then imitating his correspondent, and turning to the practical, he supplied him, to the best of his means, with the information he had requested, assured him he might still rely on the paternal affection and devotion in time to come, and finally, expatiating on his own forlorn and utterly desolate lot, appealed to his son's interests, as well as filial piety, to secure to him the means of subsistence.

Distrusting, perhaps, that son's generosity, or misdoubting the value of the services he might have it in his power to render him, his letter had its postscript too :

“ Poor Mr. Childersleigh is no more. He sank gradually, and expired peacefully at Sir Basil's place in Scotland. Whatever your feelings may have been, my dear boy, let me entreat of you to bury them in his tomb. His death makes the papers you allude to more worthless to you than ever, which will be doubtless annoying, but we must look for trials in this life, and remember that restoring them will make the chase less hot after you, while it may be very helpful to me in arranging terms with

the liquidators. So I implore of you to let me have them, and the sooner the better. I am happy to show you how to be of real service to me without injuring yourself."

Fortunately for all parties, Hemprigge saw the matter in the light in which the wary Hooker had placed it, and moved perhaps by the unexpectedly forgiving tone of the father he had wronged, lost no time in gladdening the old man's heart by transmitting him much of the missing property. The result was the recovery by the Crédit Foncier of a quantity of bonds and scrip that materially brightened its prospects. Brought face to face with the liquidators by Mr. Rivington's interposition, Hooker's demeanour had been abjectly conciliatory; he had wept bitter tears over the unworthy son by whose conduct he had been one of the heaviest sufferers; expressed his satisfaction that tardy repentance should have been followed by partial atonement, and that he, Hooker, had been by the blessing of Providence, the human instrument of retrieving so much valuable property for his fellow-shareholders. At first he solemnly averred his ignorance of the whereabouts of his erring son, who, as he pertinently remarked, was far too clever to put it in the power of any one to denounce him—far less of a man with his own well-known rectitude of principle. The first letter that had come to hand, had borne a French postmark, that was all he could tell; and unluckily he had torn it to shreds in a natural transport of grief and indignation. The packet he had had the satisfaction of restoring them, with its accompanying note, had been left anonymously at his lodgings, and the paper which had enveloped it was much at their service. And to this strange story he adhered, until his constancy was shaken by threats of avenging justice, and assurances that only the fullest confession of all he knew could extricate him from a dangerously false position. If he had nothing to tell, so much the worse for him. If he had, the liquidators might possibly be prevailed on, in the interests of the Company, so far to blink their strict duty as not merely to overlook his fault, but to consider his services. Thus painfully assailed, his reticence gave way. In a burst of grief he entreated them to deal gently by a fond parent, who had been tempted to shield an erring child; lamented, with apparently genuine feeling, that he really, at his son's suggestion, had destroyed the letters he had received, but protested solemnly that the last had been written from Seville, and declaring the writer's intention of forthwith quitting Spain; had given no further clue to his intentions. With this the inquisitors were constrained to be content, and it was agreed to direct a flying party from Scotland Yard on the traces of the missing one. The proceeding was absolutely *de rigueur* for the satisfaction of troublesome shareholders, but no one felt over-sanguine as to the running into a fox who had got so well away, when the scent was so cold, the earth he might head for so doubtful, and when the necessity of invoking the cumbrous intervention of the Foreign Office to the help of justice made the ground so holding.

On examination of the recovered securities, the liquidator expressed himself hopeful—and the remark was meant for the directors, not the shareholders, which gave it a very different significance—that a single moderate call might be made to suffice for the more pressing claims, while the others might run off as assets realized themselves; and that, ultimately, there might even be a something to return. Childersleigh's investigation led him to the same conclusion, and thus, bad as things were, they were likely to be greatly better than had been guessed at first. At the impending meeting there would be what might be considered an agreeable surprise in store for the shareholders, which it might be hoped would soothe them into a frame of mind in which they would give a more cordial hearing to explanations, and to Childersleigh a cordial hearing was everything. So said Mc Alpine, addressing himself encouragingly to his over-sensitive friend.

"Really, my dear Childersleigh, you take this far too much to heart. Those who play at bowls must expect to meet with rubbers, and public men must be prepared to face abuse. Those fellows who attacked you knew in their hearts they were lying, and now they see their falsehoods exploding one by one. Depend on it, we who are officially connected with the company will do you public justice, and this must soon blow over, and be forgotten. After all you can afford to let them talk, when you recollect that you slipped out of it in time, and that in the most honourable and open manner. Without an afterthought you can claim your old relation's money, take yourself off to your family place with a round half-million and a charming wife, and till you come back to life, and go into Parliament, grumble at your ease at the world's ingratitude; for say what they like, it was you who made us, and Providence and that rascal Hooker together who undid your work. I had my own stake in the Company, and between that and my friendship for you may be allowed to be a dispassionate judge, and believe me I only speak as every one else will in another twelve months."

But Hugh's countenance did not brighten much at the golden visions his friend had conjured up. Wealth and peace, and even Lucy, would have had few charms for him, had he felt his own ill-advised acts had given scandal the right of access to his Eden.

So far as Lucy was concerned, days of reserve were over for him, and from her he had scarcely a secret. Like most men who have been in the way of closely locking up their bosoms, his confidence, when he had fairly given it, came with a rush, and he revelled in the luxury of sharing his inmost thoughts with some one he could freely trust in. The spirit of unworldliness that had wrestled with him while his heart was shackled in the golden fetters of Lothbury was in the ascendant now; he had become alive to all he might have spared himself had he listened to its promptings sooner, and with refinements of conscience and honour in question, he came to Lucy as to an holy oracle, predisposed to see with her eyes and judge with her judgment.

"Upon my word, Hugh," she exclaimed one day, "I am terrified at the responsibilities you contrive to throw on me. How well I remember when I was too awestruck by the sense of your iron will and unconquerable self-reliance to have dreamed of daring to love you even in *châteaux d'Espagne*, and now, forgive my vanity, but it seems as if you have made over to me both the one and the other; as if I had only to speak for you to obey."

"I am leaving my idols to listen to my good angel. And do not flatter yourself I obey blindly; but the more I revolve your advice the more it comes to me as inspiration. It is often the very last the world would give me, it is true, but I have had enough of the world, for the time at least, and by way of a change I mean to try living for you."

"A poor object to give up a life like yours for, Hugh," she answered, looking up at him fondly, through blushes and smiles; "but if you insisted, I fear I should be too much of a woman to refuse. At least I shall struggle for the first place with you, I tell you fairly."

"That is yours for life, dearest, be sure. But hear me quietly while I make one more confession. There is a something I have been hesitating over long; if I have kept it from you, it is because I had a presentiment how your nature must decide, and I felt I ought to protect you against yourself and me and a decision which the most honourable men I could consult would most likely mock as moral quixotism. You believe me rich, and rich I am, and my riches are mine beyond the reach of law or even opinion. What if I were to ask you to begin our wedded life with the sacrifice of them, with the sacrifice of everything except our love, and for scruples very likely overstrained?"

"Your riches are nothing to me, you know very well; why, indeed, should they be so. I had accustomed myself to look forward to poverty and solitude, and you have offered me a home and a heart—and such a heart! No one can judge your scruples like yourself. If you go by your own feelings, you can never go wrong."

"As I said, it was because I was so sure of how you would advise that I never asked you for advice, and my worldly wisdom clings by me so fast that I am half ashamed to break the matter even to you. It is simply this. I fear nothing will ever persuade the public, and what is far more, I may never succeed in convincing myself that I am not the indirect cause of all the misfortunes of the Crédit Foncier. After clearing accounts there, and thanks to it entirely, I shall be in a position to claim in September that succession of Miss Childersleigh's I have been labouring for. Yet my feeling is, that we should live an unhappy, and what is worse, a dishonoured life, if we were to withdraw in our wealth to Childersleigh, while others were in poverty by my fault."

"And you would give up all you have been working for and won, and the fortune that ought to have been yours by birth and right!" exclaimed Lucy, looking at him with admiration. "Oh, Hugh, I cannot recommend you to do it."

"But for yourself?"

"For me. Nothing could make me prouder of my husband than I am, and let our circumstances be what they may, I must be perfectly happy with him."

"Remember that is not all. The most I may do can only repair a part of the mischief, and if I act, I cannot act by halves; Childersleigh must go with the rest, and the smaller sacrifice that—that we could never live there. Yet I had so looked to seeing you mistress in my old home. After all, as Horace or some one else says, 'it is in our mind and not in our surroundings we must find our happiness.'"

"Horace, or some one else, was quite right, and I cannot conceive our being unhappy anywhere. Yet I do wish, for your sake, you could have saved Childersleigh, and I shrink more and more from having anything to do with advising you to what you would so very naturally repent. Weigh it well, at least, that you may have no regrets left but natural ones, and however you decide, I shall be contented and happy."

"Before my mind is made up, I mean to talk it over with the friends who have stood by me so firmly through all this business. That much, at least, I owe them;" and thereupon the interview took a turn which cannot have any interest for the public.

The associations with Childersleigh that had twisted themselves into the fibres of his nature; the hopes he had cherished of one day reviving his boyish memories; of returning to his family home and repairing his family fortunes, made strong remonstrance with Hugh, urging him to take the common-sense view of the situation and act as the world would have him act; and as he had expected, he found his friends, to a man, upon the same side.

"My dear fellow," said McAlpine, "as you know, I am one of the sufferers your conscience reproaches you with having victimized, and I have told you already my opinion of the relation you stand in to the Company. 'Jowk and let the jaw gae by,' as the Scotch proverb says, or to paraphrase it in English, only let them have out their say and you may depend on their soon being silent, and for the best of all reasons, that they have really nothing to reproach you with. Gravely, and on my honour, Hugh, to act as you talk of acting would be gratuitous folly, and the very people you benefit would be much more likely to laugh at you than to thank you. In your place, moreover, I should feel I owed a duty to my ancestors which would make it both sin and shame to throw Childersleigh away for such a crotchet."

"Well, Hugh," remarked Rushbrook, "it is a most romantic idea and does credit to your powers of fancy. If I thought you meant it seriously I should preach to you about casting pearls to the pigs,—for acting chivalrously by a rabble of City speculators strikes me as being very much the same thing. As I don't do you that injustice, I shall spare my breath."

"For my part I should just as soon think of sending a cheque for

conscience-money to the croupiers at Homburg after a lucky season, were a lucky season conceivable," commented Barrington, who was present. "But if you do make yourself a pauper, remember, Childersleigh, you have a right to count on me." Barrington in possession of his uncle's property was now a man of wealth and position.

And when he broached the idea to the dignified Lord Hestercombe, the peer doubted if he had heard aright, and when by repetition he had convinced himself that his ears had not deceived him, he looked uneasily at his nephew, as if suspecting that, a long lucid interval notwithstanding, his brain was still shaken by the effects of his illness. So Hugh having collected all the opinions he cared for, had only to decide for himself before the next meeting of the shareholders.

He felt very gratefully to his uncle, and listened patiently, while by a most candid expression of opinion the Earl indemnified himself for the trouble he had taken in what had been a very painful business to him. More for Rushbrook's sake than his own, Hugh went a good deal to Hestercombe House. Rushbrook had confided to him that he only waited till the earlier weeks of mourning were over to propose in form for Miss Childersleigh, and Hugh knew he could best repay his cousin's friendship by smoothing the way to a marriage he rejoiced in with his whole heart. It should be no fault of his if the Hestercombes were not alive to the value of the wife their heir was determined to bring home to them, and no one could speak to her worth with more heartfelt sincerity than Hugh. He showed himself regularly at his clubs as matter of duty, but what time he could spare from "The Cedars" was spent with half-a-dozen of intimates. If the unhappy Crédit Foncier had done nothing else, at least it had sifted his friends for him, and that was something in a world where it is so hard to tell them.

Very soon to come to me again the old, same old, and as
soon as possible will make a few more and then go on.

The Story of a Dead Monopoly.

With the payment of 300,000*l.*, the price of the cession of their rights to the Dominion of Canada, officially expired the political privileges of "the Honourable Company of Merchant Adventurers trading unto Hudson's Bay"—the last of the great English monopolies: a commercial corporation which, with a few clerks, ruled more than half of North America, after a fashion despotic and irresponsible enough: a mere joint-stock company of traders, who yet, at their own sweet will, under their own banner of "pro pelle et cute," declared war and made peace, and without a single soldier held in awe and loyal subjection fierce tribes of Indian warriors, all across the broad continent of America from York Factory to Fort Victoria. The last of the old proprietary governments, they saw the gorgeous career of the East India Company, and its decline and fall; they witnessed Louisiana ceded by his Most Christian Majesty of Spain, and the Seigneurs of Canada become subjects of Great Britain, and again of the new-born Dominion of Canada: the Darien enterprise come to ruin, the South Sea Bubble burst, and a dozen rivals brought to nought: they remembered when all North America was the plantation of his Majesty, themselves remaining loyal and attached when the colonies broke from the mother country: they survived eleven sovereigns and died in the reign of the twelfth.

We, who knew the Company in its palmy days, who drank its good wine and eat of its salt; who hobnobbed in its picketed forts with the sturdy factors at great oaken tables laden with beaver-tails, buffalo-tongues, and huge roasts of moose, and of elk, and of caubon; dishes of juicy antelope and luscious salmon from the rivers of its empire of territory, ptarmigan from Hudson's Bay, oulachan, most delicious of fishes, from Vancouver Island, and snowy hares from the Eskimo along the shores of the Arctic Sea: we, who shared its stirring enterprises, and floated down far western rivers in its birch-bark canoes, who have been honoured with seeing our names carved on tamarack "lobsticks" on the Albany River, and on cedar ones on the Columbia, in return for *régales* of tea, tobacco, and rum largessed unto its voyageurs: we who were, in a word, *of it*, have precious memories in relation to the great corporation, and may be excused for lingering fondly over its history, even at a time when the world is most disposed to hold its achievements cheaply, and to dwell severely upon its misdoings and shortcomings.

About the year 1667 there was living in a dull set of chambers in the Temple a retired soldier, who, having done knightly service for his royal uncle "of sacred memory," was busy with endless chemical experiments, never productive of much good to the world, and rather injurious

to his own slender purse. He had always been on the eve of some great discovery, but had never made it; and now his Serene Highness Rupert, Prince Palatine of the Rhine, was fast settling down into being a sort of *Maecenas* to every needy adventurer who found his way with a plausible scheme to the further side of Temple Bar. Rummaging through the dusty tomes of the Temple Library, he read how, in 1252, Marco Polo, the great Venetian traveller, saw in the tent of the Grand Khan of Tartary furs and sables "brought from the North, from the land of darkness." The idea struck him, that could these furs be got now, what a splendid scheme it would be. Just then he was waited on by a man who had travelled much in North America, and was well acquainted with the wild Indian tribes not far from the shores of Hudson's Bay. This was M. Grosseliez, a Frenchman, almost as full of schemes as the Prince himself; but, on this particular occasion, occupied with one more than ordinarily feasible. He fired the imagination of the Palatine by his pictures of the exceeding abundance of fur-animals on the shores of Hudson's Bay, and the great profit which could be made from them. The result was, that after an experimental trip had proved successful, the influence of Prince Rupert succeeded in forming a joint-stock company of noblemen and gentlemen for the purpose of pursuing this fur-trade. Furthermore, his cousin, the King—for what back-handed *douceur* history does not inform us—granted to this company of "Merchant Adventurers trading with Hudson's Bay" a charter investing them with a monopoly of the furs and lands of all the borders of all the streams flowing into Hudson's Bay, not occupied by the subjects of any Christian prince; and, furthermore, the privilege to make "war and peace with the people not subjects of any Christian prince." This was dated the 2nd of May, 1669. The adventurers gradually extended their enterprise, until, 190 years later, they possessed 155 establishments, in charge of 25 chief factors, 28 chief traders, 152 clerks, and 1,200 other servants, besides having a large number of natives under their control. These trading districts (38 in number) were divided into five departments, and extended over a country nearly as big as Europe, though thinly peopled by some 160,000 natives, Esquimaux, Indians, and half-breeds.

A typical "fort" of the Hudson's Bay Company was not at best a very lively sort of affair, though sometimes, built on a commanding situation at the bend of some beautiful river and backed by wave after wave of dark pine-forest, it was not unpicturesque in appearance. Fancy a parallelogram of greater or less extent enclosed by a picket twenty-five or thirty feet in height, composed of upright trunks of trees, placed in a trench and fastened along the top by a rail, and you have the enclosure. At each corner was a strong bastion built of squared logs, and pierced for guns which could sweep every side of the fort. Inside this picket was a gallery running right round the enclosure, just high enough for a man's head to be level with the top of the fence. At intervals all along the side of the picket were loop-holes for musketry, and over the gateway was another bastion, from which shot could be poured

on any party attempting to carry the gate. Altogether, though perfectly incapable of withstanding a ten-pounder for a couple of hours, it was strong enough to resist almost any attack the Indians could bring against it. Inside this enclosure were the store-houses, houses of the employés, wells, and sometimes a good garden. All night long a *voyageur* would, watch by watch, pace round this gallery, crying out at intervals, with a quid of tobacco in his cheek, the hours and the state of the weather. This was as a precaution in case of fire, and the hour-calling was to prevent him falling asleep for any length of time. Some of the less important and more distant outposts were only rough little log cabins among the snow, without picket or other enclosure, where a "post-master" resided to superintend the affairs of the Company. The mode of trading was peculiar. It was an entire system of barter, a "made" or "typical" beaver-skin being the standard of trade. It was, in fact, the currency of the country. Thus an Indian arriving at one of the Company's establishments with a bundle of furs which he intends to sell, proceeds, in the first instance, to the trading-room: there the trader separates the furs into lots, and after adding up the amount, delivers to the Indian a number of little pieces of wood, indicating the number of "made-beavers" to which his "hunt" amounts. He is next taken to the store-room, where he finds himself surrounded by bales of blankets, slop-coats, guns, scalping-knives, tomahawks (all made in Birmingham), powder-horns, flints, axes, &c. Each article has a recognized value in "made-beavers;" a slop coat, for example, may be worth five made-beavers, for which the Indian delivers up twelve of his pieces of wood; for a gun he gives twenty; for a knife two; and so on, until his stock of wooden cash is expended. At every port, or at least in every district, there is a tariff established which varies very little year by year. The Indian cannot understand the varying price of furs, and accordingly the Company takes the risk of this change, and unless the fall is of long continuance, gives the same price for the fur as formerly when it was high, or *vice versa*. Therefore on some furs the Company loses,* but it compensates itself on others. The Indian need not, however, attempt to beat down the price. The tariff is unchangeable. If you are not pleased you are at perfect liberty to go to the next shop; and this, combined with the fact that the Company sells nothing to the Indians which is not of the best quality of its kind, has gone far to gain the confidence of the natives in them, over the American traders. Sometimes the Indian is introduced, while trading, into a narrow passage, the end of which faces a window like the window of a railway or theatre ticket-office, at which he conducts his negotiations with the trader. After finishing he is presented with some trifle in addition to the payment for his furs, and makes room for some one else. The passage is crooked, for the simple reason that experience tells the trader that the Indian is apt, in a heated bargain, to shoot him from behind!

* See on this point Dr. Rae's evidence in the *Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Hudson's Bay Company*, 1857, p. 36.

The officers of the Company are classed as follows:—First, the labourer, who is ready to turn his hand to anything: to become a trapper, fisherman or rough carpenter, at the shortest notice. He is generally employed in cutting firewood for the consumption of the establishment at which he is stationed, shovelling snow from before the doors, mending all sorts of damages to all sorts of things; and, during the summer, in transporting furs and goods between his port and the nearest dépôt. He is often called a *voyageur*. “Next in rank is the interpreter: he is, for the most part, an intelligent labourer of pretty long standing in the service, who, having picked up a smattering of Indian, is useful in trading with the natives. After the interpreter comes the postmaster, usually a promoted labourer, who, for good behaviour or valuable services, has been put on a footing with the gentlemen of the service, in the same manner that a private soldier in the army is sometimes raised to the rank of a commissioned officer. Next are the apprentice clerks—raw lads, who come out fresh from school, with their mouths agape at the wonders they behold in Hudson’s Bay.” They grow more sensible and sedate before they pass through the first five years of their apprenticeship, when they attain the rank of clerks. The clerk, after a number of years of service, becomes a chief trader (or half shareholder), and in a few years more he attains the highest rank in the service—that of chief factor. All other officers of the Company, such as surgeons and ship-captains, equally pass through these grades, and take relative rank, though, of course, they are not apprentice-clerks at any time. Frequently now-a-days this initiatory training is also dispensed with in the case of the ordinary mercantile officers. The salaries of the clerks vary from 20*l.* to 100*l.*, with board and clothing at a little over cost price; while the emoluments of the higher officers vary according to the dividend. They are almost invariably Scotchmen, while the labourers are Orkney men, French Canadians, and Norwegians. Not so many young men of good family now enter the service as formerly, the prospects of promotion not being so great, and when promotion does come the profits are less than they used to be. The labourers are paid miserably—only about 1*l.* or 80*s.* per month, but still the Company have no great difficulty in obtaining their complement of men. Winter was dull enough in these snow-choked forts. The furs had to be sorted, looked to continually, and packed. Then the officer occupied his leisure time in reading what books he had, telling interminable stories, sleeping, hunting, or in preparing specimens of natural history, in the study of which not a few have attained eminence. I have heard of a fort where the inmates were so hard pressed by *ennui* that, as my informant told me, “they absolutely began to write commentaries on the Gospel of Ezekiel!” As the spring advances the officer repairs the fort, and gets the furs out to a rendezvous, where the functionary in charge of the “brigade” meets him and others, and delivers over his stores. The furs are now taken down to Victoria or Montreal, sprinkled with rum, packed in old rum casks, or in moth-tight rooms, and despatched by quick sailing double-manned ships to England. To the annual sales

come the fur-dealers from every part,—Russians, Bulgarians, Poles, Greeks, Jews, and Gentiles of all nations. Gracechurch Street is then a study for an ethnologist. The dividend is declared by the "Governor, Deputy-Governor, and Committee," who preside over the shareholders in London ; and the affairs for the next year settled on. And so the routine of the great Fur Company proceeds.

Living far in the outer world, these exiles derived their notions of the ways of the rest of mankind either from books—often of rather an ancient date—from a raw, newly arrived clerk, from a rare visit to a frontier town, or from some semi-civilized traveller—naturalist or sportsman—who had found his way, after long journeyings, to the traders' bepicketed fort. Sometimes a hoary old factor would go as far as Montreal, ay, even London and Paris, and come back with a wondrous display of all sorts of knicknacks, peculiar photographs, and the undisputed privilege to talk like Sir Oracle, and to shoot with the long bow for the remainder of his natural life. They conducted their business much as business was conducted in Charles II.'s reign, and they talked of the world as it was when they entered the Company, raw lads, maybe forty or more years before. Duelling was still supposed to be the "correct thing among gentlemen;" and at the slightest provocation it was thought quite indispensable to a "gentleman's honour" to "call out" another "gentleman," with whom the challenger had lived on terms of friendship for many years, and must perforce live in amity or enmity for a good number yet. Many, however, of the Company's officers were accomplished gentlemen and good scholars. My first acquaintance with Tasso and Dante in the original was derived from a Highland gentleman—first-cousin of a peer—who was the trader in charge of a far northern fort where I was then posted, and I have met others whom it would be difficult to puzzle in a passage in any of the more familiar Greek or Latin classics, and who were equally acquainted with Shakspeare, Addison, and Tennyson. With their wild surroundings and their almost barbarous modes of life, these people soon became half courtier half savage, the polite side of their existence only to be uncovered when a lettered stranger—rare event—came among them. Many of the officers were men of "good family," and proud of their gentle blood and long descent. Not less proud were we all of our connection with *the* Company. We never looked upon ourselves in the light of mere clerks of a commercial corporation, but talked most contemptuously of "quill-drivers" and "counter-jumpers" generally. No Government clerk was prouder of his appointment, no young East India "writer" in the palmy days of John Company more exultant over his, than were we young clerks in the great Fur Company's employ. And with reason too, for many of us, within a year or two of our first entrance on duty, were governing a district as large as Scotland, thinly peopled, no doubt, but yet with irresponsible power over the destinies of the few hundred savages who hunted furs for us. Then from being merely in receipt of a salary, we rose to be "traders" and "factors," when we were "partners" in the Company, shared in its profits, and had in our turn the making and

unmaking of factors and chief factors; the governorship of a department was hardly beyond our reach, and we might even attain the tip-top of all human greatness, and become "Governor-General of Rupert's Land."

When the young clerk went out to "the country," a wife as a *compagnon de voyage* was out of the question; and most frequently, when he was able to marry, he was far distant from the women of his own race, or from civilization of any sort. The same was true of the early pioneers all over the American continent, few of them caring to take wives with them, but preferring, for a time at least, to push their fortune alone. Absence from home, and a familiarity with the race around them, soon broke the links which once bound them to their fatherland and the women of their country, and many took wives from among the daughters of the soil. This was particularly common among the servants of the great fur companies, not only because few white women cared to take up their lot with the rovers of the wide fur countries, but that it was also a matter of policy to ingratiate themselves with the powerful Indian tribes among whom they were thrown. The Hudson's Bay Company, ever the most shrewd of merchants—most cautious of Scotchmen—encouraged this mating with the Indian races among their officers and voyageurs, mainly in order that their employés might have ties which would retain them in the country and consolidate the foundations of the Company by bonds of relationship and friendship between all their factors, traders, and servants generally. So sons and daughters were born to the Macs and Pierres, and the blood of Indian warriors mingling with that of "Hieland lairds" and French bourgeois, the traders, the trappers, and the voyageurs of the great Fur Company began to flow in a steady stream all through "His Majesty's Plantations in North America," deepening and expanding until it reached from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from York Factory to Fort Victoria. Between the husbands and wives there could, of course, be little sympathy. The uncivilized wife clung to her customs and her people, while the husband treated her not as an equal but an inferior. However, in course of time, as a fort grew older, there arose up around it a number of half-breed girls tolerably well educated, exceeding intelligent, and no way deficient in beauty. Indeed I do not ever remember seeing a really ugly half-breed girl, for if she had irregular features, the magnificent black eyes, brunette complexion and raven locks always gave her peculiar attractions. Add to this a handsome figure, lithe and graceful, and that peculiar sweetness and *naïveté* peculiar to the half-breed, and it is not to be wondered at that she should soon charm the young officer out of the recollection of the fair-haired Scottish lasses he had left in the Glen of Tramowhusky. When it is considered (and you may be sure Donald McDonald, the pushing young clerk, was not at all deficient in reflection that way), that these young ladies were often the daughters of the great factors and other officers of the Company, the wedding of them can scarcely be called an act of great self-denial. The old factor would not be apt to forget his son-in-law when the next batch of chief traders was to be made,

and often dying possessed of a good deal of the world's gear, his daughter would come into possession of no small amount of property. It used to be noted in the Company, in latter days, that if an officer married a "white girl" on any of his visits to Montreal or Victoria, he could give no surer guarantee of his fitness for non-advancement in the Company. "Oor ain fish-guts to oor ain sea-maws,"* used to be the motto of the Board of Management composed of old factors who had daughters to marry. Young officers, knowing this, proceeded accordingly. Sometimes these girls, though called half-breeds, were perfectly undistinguishable from whites, and had sometimes only an eighth of Indian blood. Still, what with association and early education, the Indian cropped out now and then, and the nationality of the lady was rarely to be mistaken. Yet, after all, they made fairly good wives and mothers, and to this day get married more readily in Victoria than the shoals of English girls which the establishment of the colony has brought out. The Anthropological Society and M. Paul Brocas notwithstanding, these Indian marriages were usually productive of large families; and rarely is an officer unblessed with a quiverful. At most of the large central posts were schools, and at Victoria and Red River the Company supported good establishments for the education of the children of the Company's gentlemen and servants. Many of the wealthier officers, who were solicitous of a better education for their children, even sent them to England; and on the roll of more than one English university are inscribed the names of half-breed graduates. When a young trader first unites himself to an Indian woman of whole-blood he hardly counts upon a family, and imagines that he can easily break off a marriage the only ceremony connected with which consists of taking unto himself "some savage woman." But he is mistaken, and when the time which he has fixed for leaving the Indian country arrives, he finds that the faithful companion of so many years cannot be easily shaken off. Children have grown up around him, the natural affection of the father prevails, and he despises the laws of civilized society; each succeeding year weakens the recollection of home, and, in most cases, the temporary *liaison* ends in a permanent union. Those so circumstanced, on quitting the Company, bring their families to Canada, Red River, Willamette Valley in Oregon, British Columbia, or Vancouver Island, where they purchase lands, on which they live in a kind of half Indian, half civilized fashion; constantly smoking their calumets, and railing at the fashionable frivolities of the great world, and eternally growling at the dissipation of the new-comers—the settlers around them. The girls generally turn out pretty well, but the boys are inclined to pick up all the bad qualities and few of the good ones of civilization.

Of course such a successful company as this turned out to be was not long in being opposed, and the story of the Rival Traders is not the least

* "Our own fish-refuse to our sea-gulls;" or, in other words, "Charity begins at home."

interesting or smallest item in its chronicles. Previous to the year 1783 the adventurers had many petty rivals to withstand, and these they chiefly got the better of by fomenting divisions and animosities among the Indians of the interior, so as to terrify any one from engaging in trade in that quarter. This had been an old trick of theirs when any Indian tribe was likely to combine with another against them, and now they turned this time-honoured weapon against their rivals. Nor were they at all scrupulous as to the means by which they ousted their rivals from their domains. There stand on record two cases in which ships had attempted to enter Hudson's Bay for the purpose of trade by sea. These the Company seized and drove ashore, pleading in extenuation that they were lost by stress of weather! Soon after this the rival traders carried competition to such ruinous extremities, and so demoralized the natives with spirits, that the whole trade became disorganized, and the traders ruined alike in purse and morals. This could not last very long, and now commenced the great opponent of the Hudson's Bay Company—viz., the North-west Fur Company of Montreal, which was composed of a coalition of the chief merchants engaged in the fur trade in Canada. From small beginning it spread until it became the most powerful organization of the kind in North America. Hitherto the Hudson's Bay Company had only paid their employés by salaries, but now the North-western introduced another system, that of advancing the chief officers by their merit into the condition of partners,—in fact, the method now in vogue in the Hudson's Bay Company, who were roused up from their lethargy by the activity of their opponents. In the year 1788 the gross profit of the new adventure did not exceed 40,000*l.*, but by exertion and energy it was brought in eleven years to triple that amount. The sleepy old Hudson's Bay Company were astounded at the magnificence of the new-comers, and old traders yet talk of the lordly North-wester. It was in those days that young Washington Irving was their guest when he made his memorable journey to Montreal. The agents who presided over the affairs of the Company at head-quarters were very important personages indeed, as might be expected. They were veterans who had grown grey in the wilds, and were full of all the traditions of the fur-trade, and round them circled the laurels gained in the North. They were, in fact, a sort of commercial aristocracy in Quebec and Montreal, in days when nearly everybody was more or less directly interested in the fur-trade. To behold the North-west Company in all its state and grandeur, it was necessary to witness an annual gathering at Fort William, near what is now called the Grand Portage, on Lake Superior. Here two or three of the leading partners from Montreal proceeded once a year to meet the partners from the various trading places in the wilderness, to discuss the affairs of the Company during the preceding year, and to arrange plans for the future. On these occasions might be seen the changes since the unceremonious times of the old French traders with their roystering *courreurs de bois*,—now the aristocratical character of the Briton, or rather the feudal spirit of the Highlander, shone out magnificently. Every partner who had charge of an

interior port, and had a score of retainers at his command, felt like the chieftain of a Highland clan, and was almost as important in the eyes of his dependants as of himself. To him a visit to the grand conference at Fort William was a most important event, and he repaired there as to a meeting of Parliament. The partners from Montreal, however, were the lords of the ascendant. Coming from the midst of luxurious and ostentatious life, they quite eclipsed their compeers from the woods, whose forms and faces had been battered by rough usage and hard service, and whose garments and equipments were all the worse for wear. Indeed the partners from below considered the whole dignity of the Company as represented in their own persons, and conducted themselves in suitable style. They ascended the river in great state, like sovereigns making a progress, or rather like Highland chieftains navigating their subject lakes. They were wrapped in rich furs, their huge canoes freighted with every convenience and luxury, and manned by Canadian voyageurs as obedient as clansmen. They carried with them cooks and bakers, together with delicacies of every kind, and abundance of choice wines for the banquet which attended this great convocation. Happy were they, too, if they could meet with any distinguished stranger—above all, with some titled member of the British nobility—to accompany them on this stately occasion, and grace their high solemnities. Fort William, the scene of this important meeting, was a considerable village on the banks of Lake Superior. Here, in an immense wooden building, was the great council-chamber, and also the banqueting-hall, decorated with Indian arms and accoutrements, and the trophies of the fur-trade. The house swarmed at this time with traders and voyageurs from Montreal bound to the interior posts, and some from the interior posts bound to Montreal. The councils were held in great state, for every member felt as if sitting in Parliament, and every retainer and dependant looked up to the assemblage with awe, as to the House of Lords. There was a vast deal of solemn deliberation and hard Scottish reasoning, with an occasional swell of pompous declamation. These grave and weighty councils were alternated with huge feasts and revels. The tables in the great banqueting-room groaned under the weight of game of all kinds,—of venison from the woods, and fish from the lakes; with hunters' delicacies, such as buffaloes' tongues and beavers' tails; and various luxuries from Montreal. There was no stint of generous wine, for it was a hard-drinking period, a time of loyal toasts and Bacchanalian songs and brimming bumpers. While the chiefs thus revelled in the hall, and made the rafters resound with bursts of loyalty and old Scottish song, chaunted in voices cracked and sharpened by the northern blast, their merriment was echoed and prolonged by a mongrel legion of retainers, Canadian voyageurs, half-breed Indian hunters, and vagabond hangers-on, who feasted sumptuously without, on the crumbs from their table, and made the welkin ring with old French ditties mingled with Indian yelps and yellings.'

The Hudson's Bay Company had only confined their operations within the limits of their original grant, and never prosecuted their trade with

any very great vigour. But now the Nor'-westers pushed away north and west until they had reached the Rocky Mountains, and even beyond, on to the waters of Peace River. No doubt the Hudson's Bay Company took alarm at these new rivals, but it is more than probable that they would have been unopposed had not an accident just then occurred which changed the aspect of affairs. Lord Selkirk, an energetic Scottish nobleman, having attempted to establish a colony on Red River (afterwards the nucleus of the settlement now giving Canada so much trouble), was violently opposed by the North-west Fur Company, who found the plains on which he proposed to settle his colonists useful for buffalo-hunting and preparing the great supplies of "pemmican" (ground-dried meat and tallow), which formed the travelling food of their fur parties. This strongly incensed the Earl against the new Company, and to enable him the better to punish them, he went home and bought so large a number of Hudson's Bay shares as to obtain a controlling voice in the direction of that corporation. This influence he now exerted against the flourishing and obnoxious North-west Company. Rousing up the "Hudson Bays" from their lethargy, a vigorous competition commenced and continued for some years. Wherever the North-western established a fort, their opponents built another in close proximity. Every method which artifice, fraud, or even open violence could suggest was adopted to outwit each other, or to obtain the furs of the Indians. At first friendly when trade did not intervene, they had no mercy when the interests of their rival companies were concerned. Forts were taken and burnt, the officers in charge and the servants imprisoned and half starved, and sometimes even obliged by famine to surrender; the furs on the way to the rendezvous were intercepted and appropriated, and the whole trade turned into a furious conflict. The Governor-General of Canada sent out warrants and proclamations in vain; these were equally treated with the most sovereign contempt in a land where "the king's writ goeth not," nor had he any power to control the refractory fur-traders. Things went on in this fashion until they culminated, in 1816, in a battle in which seventeen men and three officers of the Hudson's Bay Company, including Governor Semple, were killed. This was perhaps the most serious casualty which the rivalry occasioned, but still it did not abate the fighting. Now all parley was at an end, and the pass-word was "war to the knife." Officers and men were absolutely engaged by either Company for little other purpose than fighting; and though ostensibly occupied in the fur-trade, their chief recommendation for the posts they held was their pugnacity. This could not go on very long; and accordingly, in 1821, both Companies began to see the folly of their proceedings. The trade was ruined. The Indians were demoralized by "fire-water," the prices given for the furs were out of all proportion to their value, and nobody benefited anything unless it was a bellicose clerk or other employé who had distinguished himself in this guerilla kind of commerce. The result was that the two companies coalesced under certain stipulations, Parliament granting them some additional privileges which it would be out of the

province of this paper to particularly describe. The new organization retained the name of the Hudson's Bay Company, and under this title it has continued to prosper, extending its possessions to the very shores of the Pacific, where, indeed, now its chief establishments are situated. By-and-by, as the Company spread their wings across the Rocky Mountains, and came into Oregon, where they had no real right, they were annoyed by less powerful but more irritating opposition. Every Yankee back-woodsman "went into" fur-trading on a small scale, and "calc'lated to do a right smart chance of a trade." But he reckoned without his host, or rather his next-door neighbour occupying the picketed fort on the prairie. No sooner did John McDonald, the Hudson's Bay trader, hear that Ephraim E. Goliath was about to go up the Columbia or Willamette River on a trading expedition, than he would start off ahead with a plenteous supply of goods. Intimately acquainted with the country and the people, the legitimate trader would soon make rapid progress. From their lodges on the banks the sleepy Indians would crawl down to the water's-edge, and buy powder, shot, paint, and blankets from the Hudson's Bay trader, offering the usual furs in exchange. Now began the trader's policy. Either he refused any pay at all, or gave them the goods at a ridiculous loss to himself, all the time drumming into their ears that "we are your good friends, not those miserable Boston men;";* and then, amid the plaudits of the Indians, he would start off to repeat the same game elsewhere, inwardly chuckling at the result. Well he knew that the Indian, having once obtained what he wanted, would scarcely take the trouble to come down to the water's-edge for more until this was gone. Accordingly, when our friend Ephraim E. Goliath laboriously worked up the river with his canoe-load of "notions," in which his whole capital was invested, he was astounded at finding that the Indians would not buy of him at any price, or required a price for their furs which it was out of his power to give. The end of this, it is needless to say, was the ruin of the Yankee pedlar and the triumph of the Hudson Bay trader. The one could not afford to lose on a trip, while the other could, knowing that he would compensate himself at another time, when there was no opposition in the field.

In regions where they had not the right of exclusive trade, the Company could invoke the strong arm of the law, in the shape of force, but this, in other regions, was rather a dangerous game to play at. In British Columbia, their exclusive right of trade expired in 1859, when that country was constituted a colony. In the settled parts, the Company had to stand much competition; but in the northern districts they had, and have to this day, virtually the monopoly of the fur-trade, no one opposing them. They have their forts, their established routine, and intimate knowledge of the Indians, and can, therefore, beat in open competition any inter-

* On the North Pacific coast, the Indians call all Americans "Boston men," most of the earlier traders being from that city. On the other hand the English are called "King George men," most of the discoveries of Cook and Vancouver being in George III.'s reign,

lopers. Here they would either attempt the old Oregon trick of under-selling the trader, or, what was much easier, and nearly as cheap, show the Indians that it was to their profit to deal with no outside trader. They know every Indian in their "district" by head-mark, and soon hear who has been tempted by the big price of the "free-traders" to sell a fur last summer, and a black mark is put against his name in their "trading lists." For long, it may be, the offender hears nothing about it. Regularly he pays his visits to the Hudson Bay fort, laden with furs. Then he is a welcome visitor, and departs with the customary present. But one unfortunate winter ill-luck befalls the hapless hunter, and, half-starved and shivering, he creeps along to the Hudson's Bay fort to beg credit for a few pounds of powder and shot, a couple of beaver-traps, and a blanket. Then he hears of his old offence, and is not over-politely told "to go to the man he traded that black fox's skin to three years ago—he will be sure to give him credit." On the whole, the Indian becomes convinced that, after all, it is better to trade with the Old Hudson's Bay Company. Their forts are always to be found. When he is hard up, he can get credit; and when too old to hunt, he will not be allowed to starve, if he is known as a former good hunter and faithful customer of the Company. At other times the Company adopted a course which was not so pleasing to its employés,—namely, buying up a powerful rival. I know of an instance where, many years ago, this plan had to be adopted. A smart young skipper from Boston came out to the north-west coast in a spanking new brig, laden with every kind of Yankee "notion," and pursued his trade with such spirit that he was ruining the Company completely. With a sorry heart, they bought his ship from him at a high figure, and had no sooner done so than they recollect that they would have to buy him too, otherwise he would go back, provide another brig, and go through the same course again. So, with a very wry face, they bought up the Yankee trader, and made him a chief trader in the Company at once; and there he is still, one of the highest dignitaries of the Company, and, what is curious, one of the most intense Britons in its service. I believe he stands *alone* as an American converted to an Englishman—we have not a few instances of the reverse.

In regard to the opposition of the Company to outside traders, a very few words must be said upon the much-debated subject of their treatment of the Indian tribes, now almost the sole fur-trappers. Since the fall in the price of beaver, very few, if any, white men follow the business, and it is with the natives, or the wilder description of half-breeds, that the Company alone deals. It has been frequently stated that the Company has impoverished the Indian by inducing him to clear the country of animals, and then deserting that section, and leaving the native to shift for himself. There may be some truth in that charge, but not a great deal. In the first place, in the interior at least, the Company never collected the skins of deer, which were too bulky to pay the cost of freight to the coast; and deer, elk, moose, antelope, &c., constituted a great portion of the Indians' food. That the Company's trade did not diminish game to any serious

amount can be best proved by the fact that in a district where they have long had a trading fort, I have bought from the Indians deer—good fat bucks—caught in pitfalls, for *one ball and a charge of powder*, and at another place for *five leaves of tobacco*. Again in districts where deer are not abundant, and on the banks of the great rivers, salmon formed the largest portion of the Indians' food—immense quantities being dried and stored up for winter use. The abundance of the fish, notwithstanding the quantity used by the Company's servants and exported by them, has certainly been noway affected. At Fort Rupert, on the eastern shores of Vancouver Island, I have known the potato-garden of the post *to be manured with salmon*, so enormously plentiful were they! That the Company decreased the fur animals there can be no doubt, but the fur animals never formed much of a source of food for the Indians, even before the advent of the traders. The flesh of the beaver was, and is to this day, eaten by the trappers, but the carcasses of the martens (sables), foxes, minks, muskrats, fishers, sea-otters, &c., were little, if at all used. If the Company in any way inconvenienced the Indians by their method of hunting a district, the evils must have been immensely aggravated by private traders. The Company, owing to their monopoly, had an interest in the country not being altogether destroyed for trapping purposes; and accordingly would "lay over" a certain district for so many years from being hunted. Now a private trader, anxious to make the most of the present, would never think of so doing. Besides he would, and to this day does, employ spirits in trade, which the Company voluntarily, after the North-west competition ceased, abandoned as an article of traffic, though they could get twice the amount of furs at half the price, by giving rum for them. But it was solely out of regard for the natives that they abandoned this pernicious subject of barter. Those who have read, as I have, the letters and journals of old traders, will appreciate the humanity of this regulation. The Hudson's Bay Company used also to give a proportionately higher value for inferior furs, such as musk-rats, merely in order to prevent the Indian being tempted to exterminate the more valuable animals. When the Indian grew old, the Company exercised a paternal care over him, and around every fort there are old hunters living on their bounty. No better reply can be given to those who have abused the Company for their treatment of the Indians, than the fact that to this day "the Company" is looked upon with the utmost affection and veneration by the Indian. Often have I been told, when I have complained that they charged me, for any work rendered, more than they would have charged the Company—"Yes, I know we do—but if you took care of us in our old age, and treated us as well as they have treated us, then we would do this for you at the same price." Rarely have they been at war with the Indians, though one or two of their forts have been taken, but this was invariably in the country of the hostile Indians; and if any of the officers have been killed, it was not owing to a Company feud, but merely to some private quarrel or accident, whereas the American Fur Company immediately outside their borders are perpetually at war with

the neighbouring Indians. During the Indian war in Washington Territory and Oregon, where the Hudson's Bay Company had many forts and farms, though the Americans were murdered with the most unrelenting rage, during two years, the Company's trading and hunting parties travelled about the country as formerly, keeping no watch and no guard, and *with the exception of one gentleman killed by mistake*, not one of them was injured. More than once, when travelling alone on the American and British frontier, I have met Indian war-parties, who would ask me what was my nationality. Immediately on my assuring them that I was "a King George man *straight*," they would dismount, and after smoking a pipe, bid me good-by in the most friendly manner. The contemporary annals led me to know that Americans were treated very differently. It is a great deal owing to the Hudson's Bay Company's humane and judicious treatment of the Indians that we have never had an Indian war in the British possessions, and that an Englishman is a name of love to the aborigines of the North American Continent.

The discipline maintained in the forts and travelling-parties of the Company, though free and easy, was yet within certain limits severe, and was rarely rebelled against. It was often a wonder to me how a party of grey-haired voyageurs would obey a mere boy when they could have rebelled with impunity. The reason of this was probably owing to the docile character of the French Canadian and Orkney men, and to the traditional *esprit de corps* of the Company. I only know of one instance of downright rebellion, and that was in a very remote fort on the Stekin River, in what is now called "Alaska." Incensed beyond all endurance at the drunken madness of the officer in charge—a half-breed—he was shot by one of the men, a French Canadian. Few offences of a serious nature were ever committed in the fur countries—at all events we heard little about them. They were either condoned, or summarily punished by the Company, without coming before any court. If an Indian murdered one of the Company's servants, he was pursued and captured and hung; if not now, at another time, though it might be years afterwards. The French Canadian, puzzled by the endless "Macs," usually designated his officers by nicknames. Thus he knew M. Mackenzie *le rouge*, M. Mackenzie *le blanc*, M. Mackenzie *le borgne*, M. Mackenzie *le picoté*, M. McDonald *le grande*, M. McDonald *le prêtre*, M. McDonald *le bras-croche*, and so on, according to some distinguishing mark or personal peculiarity. He was hard worked, and poorly paid, but yet thoroughly believed in *la Compagnie*, and looked upon it in the light of little better than treason if you ventured to doubt whether "the Company" was an independent power, of which Great Britain was only a powerful ally, and America the natural enemy! A marked distinction was kept up between "men" and "gentlemen" in all records of the Company. All above and including the rank of clerk were *gentlemen*, all beneath were only *men*. The gentlemen in the forts all dined together; if it was a large fort, in the "hall," and from this meal their wives were excluded. The fare on these occasions was, in the

interior forts, often poor enough, and had a knack of running upon one particular article. At one season it was all beaver, at another all elk, at another all buffalo, and so on, as the particular game predominated. At some of the far interior northern forts, where the furs were only taken out once every two years, and the "outfit" once in the same interval, the officers' supply had to be limited enough. At Fort Conolly there prevailed a tradition that the "outfit" for the personal needs of the unfortunate wight in charge used to be ten pounds of powder, fifty pounds of lead, and a pound of fishing-lines! But New Caledonia (or what is now the northern portion of British Columbia) was ever the *bête noire* of unfortunate clerks, and to that region were banished all who had offended the Chief Factor at Victoria or Vancouver. At the great dépôts on the coast, the officers dined in sumptuous style, with no lack of old Hudson Bay port, kept many years in the Company's cellars in London before it made the sea voyage to the North Pacific. In most of the other sea-coast and river forts the staple article of food was salmon—salmon salted. There are several varieties of this fish on the Pacific coast, but the two chief are the red and white, the latter being very inferior. However, though both are equally abundant, the Company devised a method to make a distinction between the "men" and "gentlemen" in this article of diet. *The one ate the white and the other the red salt salmon*, though both were equally cheap to the Company! This rather artificial piscivorous distinction between the Lords and Commons, in due course was esteemed by the old factor most natural and proper. I was once excessively amused to hear an old factor at Victoria, when descanting on his favourite topic, viz., the vices and extravagances of the new-comers whom the gold mines had brought about the fort, in contradistinction to the normal humility of those model men, the "old settlers," the Hudson Bay voyageurs, say to me, "And what d'ye think, sir, they dae? *workmen absolutely eat red salmon!*"

When travelling, "pemmican," a most nutritious kind of coarse food, familiar to many readers as that used in Arctic voyages, was the invariable provision, and bread was often never tasted for years. Though often hard-pressed for food in times of scarcity, when provision was abundant the men were fed highly, as indeed was necessary for the great labour expected of them. In addition to his suit of clothes (generally consisting of a blue cloth capot, or one made out of a blanket, leather trousers made after the Indian fashion by his wife, a striped cotton shirt and a fur cap, with a gaudy belt of variegated worsted, and often a gorgeous beaded "fur bag," for holding pipe, tobacco, &c.,) and a carrot of tobacco, the Company used to allow each man eight pounds of solid meat *per diem*, such as buffalo, deer, horse, &c., and ten pounds if there was bone in it. In the autumn months, in lieu of meat, each man would receive two large geese, or four ducks, and fish was supplied with like proportion. Sometimes in wet weather, or in making a long "portage," there would be allowed a glass of rum; but though both officers and

men were rather addicted to a carouse when they could compass it, yet generally, they had per force to be very temperate. I have before me a note of the daily consumption of dried buffalo meat at Fort Edmonton, in the buffalo country on the Saskatchewan Plain. At the date of the statement (February 2, 1858) there were living at that port 27 men, 19 women, and 48 children, in all 94 persons; and to this family the officer in charge daily distributed no less than 406 lbs. of meat! However, to prevent astonishment at this enormous butcher's bill, it ought to be mentioned that this was their exclusive food—no bread, potatoes, or other vegetables being, in general, eaten with it. At New Year each family received a little rum, a few pounds of flour and "grease," and a beaver, or piece of elk, &c., which was called the "régale." On New Year's morning they called upon the officer in charge of the fort to wish him the compliments of the season, when they were treated to sweet cakes and a glass of rum. The day wound up with a ball, and I have particularly observed in the journal which is kept in each fort, that on January 2 there is this suggestive entry, "*No prayers this morning.*" If you listened to the men, there was no evil which *la Compagnie* was not guilty of conniving at, and their wrongs were endless. They would tell you, for instance, how, when a man's engagement was up, he could never get out of the Company; he was either in debt, or his accounts were scattered all over the country. Generally, however, when you began to inquire into these wrongs, it would be found that most of them were groundless or exaggerated. Still, however, the Company after their own fashion exacted a very fair return for their money.

Critics, more severe than a few voyageurs, as well as more influential, appealed to a wider audience in bringing charges against the Company. In their original charter they were bound to assist in the discovery of the North-west passage. With the exception of a few voyages, such as Hearne's, and some assistance to the Franklin expeditions,—notably that of Dr. Rae, a chief factor, who discovered the first remains of Franklin,—they not only did nothing, but, if report speaks not untruly, absolutely put obstacles in the way of others. Perhaps they did. It was a very foolish law which bound down a company of fur-merchants to colonize their own possessions. In possession of an estate richly stocked with game, they were little inclined to encourage poachers on it; or holding their land on an uncertain tenure, very anxious to assist spies in revealing the riches of their domain. Still, we cannot but hold in grateful remembrance how hospitably they entertained, how efficiently they assisted many scientific travellers in their territory. Without their aid, Back, Richardson, Franklin, Geyer, Douglas, Jeffrey, Brown, and others, could never have accomplished what they did for science. They were also most just and humane to the colonists when they got into trouble, and are known to have ransomed several sailors from slavery among the Queen Charlotte Islanders, without ever being repaid the expense incurred by the English Government. Were we writing a panegyric on the Company, or a thesis in their defence, instead of a mere

series of reminiscences of their career, we could tell of many other generous acts, which they have never been credited with.

About the *profits* of the Company there has been grave misapprehension. Certainly at first these were enormous. In the hostilities between the French and English between 1682 and 1688 they lost 118,014*l.*, yet in 1684 a dividend of fifty per cent. was declared, and in 1689 one of twenty-five per cent. The capture of fortresses by the French at intervals between 1682 and 1697 cost them 97,500*l.* Yet, shortly after the peace of Utrecht they had trebled their capital with a call of only ten per cent. on the shareholders. No wonder that in those days, and for long after, a Hudson Bay share was never in the market. It was a good inheritance handed down from father to son. An old gentleman now living (one of the most celebrated historically of all the heroes of fur-trade) told me that, when he established Fort Dunvegan on Peace River, near the Rocky Mountains, the regular price of a trade musket was Rocky Mountain sables piled up on each side of it until they were level with the muzzle. The sables were worth in England at least 3*l.* a-piece, and the musket cost in all not over 1*l.* The price of a six-shilling blanket was, in like manner, thirteen beavers of the best qualities and twenty of a less excellent description. At that time beaver was worth 32*s.* per lb., and a good beaver would weigh from 1 lb. to 1*1/2* lb. These were the palmy days of the fur-trade. Gradually the Indians began to know better the price of a musket and of their furs, and to object most decidedly to the one being piled along the sides of the other, which report sayeth was lengthened every year by two inches, until the barrel reached colossal dimensions. Finally, a pestilent fellow discovered silk as a substitute for the napping of beaver hats, and from that dates the decline of the Hudson's Bay Company. The Company held by their beaver furs until they saw it was hopeless. This fur has never since rallied in price. So rapid was the fall that, while in 1839 beaver was 27*s.* 6*d.* per lb., in 1846 it had fallen to 8*s.* 5*d.* A beaver was the staple of the fur-trade the profits rapidly decreased. At the present moment beaver is obtained from the Indians at Victoria, Vancouver Island (where there are numbers of fur-traders besides the Hudson's Bay Company), for 5*s.* per lb., and is worth in London about 8*s.* or 9*s.* Just now the profit of the Company on their capital is about six per cent.—at least that was the declared dividend when I last saw a report. But of course there is the value of their forts and "plant," the land round these forts, which may eventually (as did that on which the town of Victoria is now built) rise immensely in value, their sailing vessels and steamers, beside the various sums which they have received as indemnity from the United States Government, the Canadian Government, and as the price of the town site of Victoria and other places built upon their land.

For long there were evident signs of decay in the old Company, and its best friends often wondered how it could so long have stood with its originally rather crazy constitution, continually battling with parliamentary commissions and inquiries.

A petition for a renewal and confirmation of the charter to Parliament in 1697 was likely to have led to disagreeable inquiry, but the treaty of Utrecht, in 1712, once more changed the fortunes of the great Fur Company. In 1748 its enemies were beginning to rejoice at its getting into trouble, but the great colonial war again saved it. A commission sat on it in 1792; but men were too distracted with the French war to trouble themselves about the charter. The settlement of the North-west Company's troubles gave them new life, but soon the Oregon dispute, in 1845, threatened the dissolution of the Company, and abridged its limits. Since then they have had a long lawsuit with the United States for recompence for infringements on the rights secured to them by that treaty, and won, only the other day, a considerable amount of damages. The old shareholders, with the intuitive shrewdness of old times, saw the coming troubles ahead, and in 1863, to the horror of the commercial world, which was shocked at this impropriety, so widely differing from the traditions of the Company, were persuaded to sell out for a high figure to a new company of proprietors. I was in "the country" at the time, and well remember the consternation excited by this feat of the venerable body. The Company's shares were quoted, for the first time for two hundred years, at a discount! Then began the establishment of the Dominion of Canada, and the earth-hunger peculiar to youthful governments. The Canadians were determined to have the Hudson Bay territories to the very Arctic Ocean. They would have them without paying for them even. They would contest the charter, and win too. In this crisis sager heads than the "Canadian Ministry" intervened, and persuaded the Dominion to pay the Company for their rights, and the Company to part with them. And they agreed, and for 300,000^l. sold their proprietary rights. The Red River patriots are inclined to make matters a little lively for the bargainers, but that is merely a hitch which will soon be overcome. It does not affect the truth which many in the far-off wilds of America will sigh over (and possibly swear over) that the "Honourable Company of Merchant Adventurers trading unto Hudson's Bay" is no more. As a merchant company, trading without any of their old privileges, they will still exist, but as a proprietary government they will no longer be known. The world is too advanced for monopolies. Nevertheless, the Hudson's Bay Adventurers did good work in their day. Those who remember the old times cannot but feel some regret at the decease of the great Corporation; and as I pass their warehouses in Gracechurch Street, I repeat the words of Charles Lamb's lament over the "South Sea Company": "This was once a house of trade, a centre of busy interests. The throng of merchants was here, the quick pulse of gain, and here the forms of business are still kept up, though the soul be long since fled!"

Timere.

If only I might grieve my whole life long,
 And lull myself with weeping till I die,
 Making a dimness of the clear, glad sky,
 Until I had atoned for all the wrong,
 Until I had forgotten all the woe ;
 It would be almost sweet to sorrow so,
 And clothe myself with stainless love, and sit
 Bound in a prison-house of memories,
 And hang the walls with tenderest tapestries,
 Woven of fair, unfruitful pieties,
 Where weeping washes blood to broidered snow.
 There I would watch my close-caged fancies flit
 About the dusky softness of my room,
 And soothe my eyes with unreproachful gloom,
 And hear no curses upon any name,
 And bow myself but not in any shame,
 And wash both him and me from any blame
 In tears that heal us as they overflow.

Ah ! why must we grow weary of our rest,
 And cast away the burden of our peace ;
 And tire of gentle tears, and tire of prayers,
 And wander after any change of cares,
 And any new desire's untried behest
 That breaks the yoke of peaceable despair,
 Driving us forth to undesired release ?
 Even if we cling to the soft skirts of woe,
 The world sweeps by ; we have to let them go.
 All things go from us ; all but love and hate,
 And they abide to make us desolate ;
 And love is false, or else he makes us so.

Too soon I understand the end of all :
 For I remember while the false tears fall,
 Cooling the heartless fever of my cheek,
 The pleasant words of love he used to speak
 While I sat listening, happy, hushed, and meek ;
 And these I know I never shall forget ;
 I know my eyes will not be always wet ;

I do not blush ; they have been dried before.
 Oh, why will not my father's kisses stay,
 And why will not Rodrigo's go away ?
 And yet my father gave me many more ;
 I thought I loved him, too, until to-day.
 Yes, I am fain to lead the other yet
 Up the steep pathway, when the evening gloom
 Refreshes with soft dews the ransomed land,
 Till we should kneel together, hand in hand,
 Beside the chilly marble of the tomb
 Where all the banners of my fathers wave ;
 But most are his I did not die to save ;
 You know them in the day-time by the gold,
 But evening makes all mellow and all old.
 Rodrigo, too, would weep upon the grave
 At evening, though he called his father slave—
 I, should I dare to kiss away the tears ?—
 Till we could boast together of his name
 And bind our houses in one knot of fame ;
 Till we forgot the sorrow through the years,
 Whose distance lengthens out his high renown—
 If any other hand had struck him down.

If I had known, if I had known before,
 And never asked for any blood to shed,
 But sat in peace beside the peaceful dead,
 And let the cry go storming overhead !
 Was vengeance mine ? do women go to war ?
 If I had known and never seen him more,
 Seen him no more, and prayed for him in peace,
 And worn myself away, and won release
 Under the kind, unbroken yoke of pain,
 Till I could dare to meet them both again.
 And now, and now I never am alone,
 His presence is upon me like a chain :
 I tremble now, lest he should hear me moan,
 And offer up his life to me again,
 And stab me with the pity of his eye.
 His life, he offers it as if in play
 He thinks it such a little thing to die :
 No wonder : he is not afraid to slay :
 He loves his father first, why cannot I ?

If we had known and loved each other long,
 If I had had more space, by day and night,
 To feel my soul upon his steadfast might,

And treasured up his loyalty at heart,
 And grown to him till I could stand apart,
 And changed myself in him to true and strong.
 Now I am weak, so weak, and none at hand
 To stay me up a little with their scorn,
 To shut me up from sinning with their hate,
 And scourge me back, and make me desolate,
 And teach me how I ought to be forlorn ;
 If they would teach me, I should understand.
 Now all the voices cheer me on one way,
 And all the faces smile away my shame :
 A little while, no doubt, hell lies in wait,
 And I shall be an everlasting name,
 And fathers curse the day when I was born.
 Would any help me if I overcame,
 If I could stand alone against the blame ?
 Even Rodrigo says the same as they ;
 He bides me love him, if I will not slay ;
 And who am I ? how should I disobey ?
 I dare not ask my heart, I know what it would say—
 God's will be done, for love has swallowed mine,
 He orders it, not I, not even love ;
 If He will bless me, why should I repine ?
 Who told me what is counted shame above ?
 If shame it is, I can but kiss the rod ;
 For who shall strengthen me to strive with God ?
 And who will harm me if I do His will,
 Let my beloved take me, and be still,
 When my beloved's hand is over me
 All my life long ? and need I ever fear
 Scorn from the voices I shall never hear,
 Frowns on the faces I shall never see,
 And trouble far away, and shame to be
 When grass grows over what was Ximene,
 Who had no heart to take what she thought best ?
 How cold it grows, the stars are in the west :
 Father, good-night ; good-night, fair memories
 Of all I was not worthy to hold dear.
 Father, good-night, and leave me to my rest ;
 I have wept long, the morning must be near :
 I wrong my eyes with weeping : they are his.

*These are the words that pale Ximene said :
 And in the dewy morning she was wed
 To him, who wrought her father's overthrow,
 Since people, priests, and king would have it so.*

Saint Helena.*

THE first view of St. Helena from the sea is certainly most uninviting. On approaching it on the north-west or leeward side, there is seen, rising above the deep blue water of the South Atlantic, a line of precipitous purple cliffs, from the summits of which the apparently naked ground slopes rapidly upwards till it reaches a lofty central ridge. The wall of rock in front is seamed by numerous deep gorges, cutting down to the water's edge and extending backwards into the interior of the island; whilst, on the extreme left, stands prominently out a level-topped, semi-detached mass, 2,200 feet high, known as the "Barn."

As we steam in towards the anchorage the prospect becomes still more forbidding. The purple of the cliffs changes to a uniform brown, and, the green upland pastures and woods being now shut out from view, scarcely a trace of vegetation can be distinguished.

On nearing the landing-place the temperature rises, and the heat, reflected from the rocks, becomes really trying, while the aspect of Jamestown itself, built as it is at the bottom of a savage-looking gorge, the naked sides of which rise abruptly to a great height, is calculated to give anything but a pleasing first impression. But were the stranger to be blindfolded and transported three miles into the interior of the island, he would hardly believe, on looking around him, that he was in the same part of the world. He would find himself amongst undulating pastures of the richest green and orange tints, interspersed with woods and fir plantations, and here and there varied by beautifully wooded glens leading away towards the sea, and just allowing a glimpse of the barren rocks of the coast, mellowed by distance to a delicate purple. He would find himself in a country where the climate is an almost perpetual summer; where numerous snug-looking country-houses lie embosomed in leafy valleys; and where trees and flowering shrubs, from almost every country under the sun, grow luxuriantly.

The island is of an irregular, oval shape, ten and a half miles long, by about six broad. Lying, as it does, in the full draught of the south-east trade-wind, which varies but little in direction, and blows with more or less strength some 380 days in the year, it forms a sort of natural breakwater, and the sea, on the leeward side, is perfectly calm, allowing

* Since the above was written it has been decided by the Home Government to withdraw the infantry portion of the St. Helena garrison. The statement as to the immunity of the island from epidemics also requires qualification, the filthy and ill-drained condition of Jamestown having at length produced an outbreak of typhoid fever.

vessels of all sizes to anchor with perfect safety within a short distance of the cliffs, and close to the landing-place at Jamestown. This town, the only one in the island, lies at the bottom of one of the deep precipitous gorges which run inland from the coast on the north-western side. Little of the town is visible from the sea, but it extends up the gorge for about a mile. The anchorage is defended by powerful batteries built on the cliffs on either side, at heights varying from 120 to 600 feet. On the west we have the fort of Ladder Hill, so called from a flight of wooden steps leading to it from the town, at 600 feet. This fort stands on the very verge of the cliff, and contains the barracks of the Artillery and Engineers. To the east of the town is Munden's Hill, on the top of the cliffs of which, at 460 feet above the sea, a battery of heavy guns has been mounted; whilst, lower down, and almost overhanging the landing-place, is Munden's Point, where a casemated battery, intended for very heavy rifled guns, has recently been constructed.

In addition to these, at a projecting point near Lemon Valley, two miles to the westward, is a new battery, mounting two heavy Armstrong guns; so that, altogether, the anchorage may be looked upon as tolerably well protected from direct attack. Behind the Ladder Hill batteries the ground slopes rapidly upwards for more than a mile, culminating in the hill of High Knoll, 1,900 feet above the sea, on the top of which is a tower which has been recently converted into the principal magazine of the island. It is intended to add to it an entrenchment and batteries, with barrack accommodation for a small garrison. The post would thus serve as a keep or citadel, in which, owing to its commanding position, a small force might easily hold out for a considerable time should an enemy have succeeded in effecting a lodgment in the island.

The landing-place is a flight of stone steps on the left, or east, of a small bay, and close under the new casemated battery. From it a hot and dusty walk of a quarter of a mile, with the bay on one side and a vertical cliff on the other, brings us by a gateway through the old fortifications into the town, or rather to its lower end. Here, surrounding an open space, are the parish church, the custom-house, court-house, the different government offices, and an hotel. Few of these buildings exhibit any attempt at architectural ornament, and, to a stranger, they have a decidedly mean and shabby appearance.

The town consists mainly of one long street. From it three roads lead to the country. One by a long zigzag reaches Ladder Hill, and thence, by a still steeper ascent along the side of High Knoll, leads to the interior of the island. A second road, known as the "Side Path," winds up the eastern side of the gorge and goes to Longwood, and that part of the island; whilst a third, starting from the upper end of the town, has been carried along the side of an almost vertical cliff, and also leads into the interior. The contrast between the coast and the interior of the island has been already mentioned; the latter being covered with rich vegetation, and surrounded by an outer belt, about a mile and a half in width, of extreme

barrenness, where the only plants that grow in any abundance are a saltwort (*Salsola salsa*), locally known as "Samphire," and a low bush of the composite tribe (*Commidendron glutinosum*). Both of these are natives of the island. The common prickly pear, an introduced plant, is also frequent on the rocky slopes. It is said that when St. Helena was first discovered by the Portuguese, it was clothed to the water's edge with woods of two species of *Dombeya*—the "redwood" and "ebony" of the islanders; of the former only two or three trees now exist in a wild state, and the latter has altogether disappeared. If this tradition be true, a great change must have taken place in the climate. The higher central parts of the island condense the moisture of the clouds, brought up by the S.E. trade-wind, and still receive an abundance of rain, but the outer belt is now comparatively rainless. So marked is the difference that it often rains for days together in the interior, while scarcely a drop falls on the coast. The line of demarcation can be distinctly traced by the eye, and a person crossing from one side of the island to the other, may start in bright sunshine, enter the region of rain and cloud, pass through it, and emerge again into clear fine weather when nearing the further coast. It follows, as a matter of course, that evaporation in the dry belt is at all times very rapid.

It is said that the destruction of the original forests was caused, partly by large flocks of goats that were formerly allowed to run wild, partly by different species of insects that were accidentally introduced. The disappearance of the forests would, doubtless, diminish the amount of rain-fall, and the cessation of rain would in turn react and prevent the growth of vegetation in the dry districts. Another cause would then operate: at certain seasons heavy tropical showers fall all over the island; these acting on the unprotected surface-soil would soon wash it down into the ravines, leaving the bare rock exposed, as we now see it. It is worthy of remark too, that several ruins of houses and garden enclosures are still traceable in situations where any cultivation would, at the present day, be simply an impossibility. As regards the insects, the forests which still survive in the interior are rapidly diminishing in extent. In places whole acres of dead or dying trees may be noticed; in cutting into the latter the insects are found busily at work eating away the inner bark. In addition to these two causes the forests have been much injured by a species of bramble, an importation from Madeira, which, by its luxuriant and dense growth, smothers and kills all other vegetation that it happens to enclose.

It is found that (with one exception to be hereafter mentioned,) the temperature diminishes at the rapid rate of about one degree Fahrenheit for every hundred and fifty feet we ascend from the coast. But for each particular elevation the climate is very equable; thus, in Jamestown, the annual range of temperature is about from 68° to 86° ; at Ladder Hill 63° to 80° ; and at the elevation of about 1,700 feet, where most of the country-houses are situated, 56° to 76° . With the exception of a species of influenza, which recurs at intervals and occasionally carries

off old people, the island is remarkably healthy. Epidemics and fevers of all kinds are practically unknown. Even Jamestown, which is crowded, filthy, and ill-drained in the extreme, remains free from them in the very hottest weather. The most fatal complaints are bronchitis and pneumonia, to both of which the natives are very subject. New arrivals from England need not fear them. From what has been said, it might be supposed that the mild agreeable climate of St. Helena would be particularly well suited to consumptive patients, but such is not found to be the case; it is too relaxing and enervating; even the strong and healthy feel more or less pulled down after a few years' residence there; and English invalids are found to lose ground rapidly under its effects. The first three months of the year are the hottest and most trying. The wind then occasionally drops for several days at a time, and the air becomes most oppressive. After a few days of this calm a swell generally sets in from the north, rendering the anchorage insecure for small vessels and landing difficult. At times the rollers have been known to set in with extreme violence, creating great havoc amongst all the smaller craft lying near the shore. In connection with the rollers it may be mentioned that, although the island is entirely of volcanic origin, earthquakes are of rare occurrence, and, when they do happen, very slight; thunderstorms, too, are unknown, although lightning has occasionally been noticed far out at sea.

The flora of the island is very varied and extensive, trees and plants having been introduced from almost every quarter of the globe; but the number of species that are true natives of the place is very limited, and cannot much exceed fifty in all—about half of these, moreover (28), being ferns. Of the fifty the greater part appear to be peculiar to the island, and some of those that are found elsewhere may very possibly have been introductions. The fact is worth noting in connection with the question of the development of species. Very few native kinds are to be found in the cultivated parts; but the flora of the forests of the central heights, as well as of the cliffs of the coast, consists almost exclusively of them.

It is remarkable that not a single species of grass appears to be a native; all those that have been examined having proved to be importations from elsewhere: some from Europe, some from the Cape, and some from India. The natural deduction to be drawn is, that when the island was first discovered no grass grew on it.

Besides the ferns, there may be mentioned as part of the native flora, two species of the sedge tribe and two *Lycopodiums*. On the cliffs there are the *Salsola* and *Commidendron*, already spoken of; a *Frankenia* (on the windward side); a *Mellissia*, and a very curious *Erodium*, both now almost extinct. The plateau on which Longwood is situated was formerly covered with a forest of trees, of a family belonging to the *Compositæ*, locally known as "gumwood." Scattered trees of one species still exist, but another, the *Commidendron rotundifolium*, is now represented by a single individual only, which was lately discovered growing by itself in a

field. Besides the almost extinct dombeyas,—handsome flowering trees of the cotton tribe—the “stringwood” (*Acalypha rubra*) appears to have quite died out. The central forests consist chiefly of a remarkable family of diminutive trees called “cabbage-trees,” which, like the gumwoods, belong to the *Compositæ*. The other native trees still living in the forest are a *Petrobium*, two species of *Nesiota*, and a *Hedyotis*; associated with them are two *Umbelliferae*, a *Lobelia*, and three kinds of *Wahlenbergia*—a beautiful genus of *Campanulaceæ*. The above list comprises almost the whole of the indigenous species; the greater part are peculiar to the island, and it is worthy of notice that all the flowering plants have white or pale pink blossoms. Of the introduced trees the commonest are the Pinaster fir and the oak; whilst of shrubs the English furze is the most conspicuous, and is to be met with on every hillside.

The native forest, so often mentioned above, clothes the almost precipitous sides of a lofty central semicircular ridge, forming the highest land in the island. This ridge encloses a vast amphitheatre three miles in diameter, and open to the south, known generally as “Sandy Bay,” that being the name of a small inlet at one end of it. There are strong geological reasons for believing this amphitheatre to be the site of a vast ancient crater, from which flowed the greater part of the lava streams of which the island has been built up. The scenery of this part is the finest in St. Helena, and its effect is much enhanced by the fact that the whole of it opens out suddenly to the view on crossing the ridge from the Jamestown side. The ridge is sharply serrated, and two of its peaks—Diana’s Peak and High Hill—are the loftiest in the island, each being about 2,700 feet high. They both have the peculiarity of being situated above the stratum of the trade-wind. On ascending them, even on the most stormy days of the year, when ships are blown away from their anchors, the last 200 feet takes us into a region of perfect calm and of increased temperature. The ridge in the neighbourhood of Diana’s Peak is but a few feet wide and has almost vertical sides. Here it is possible to sit in a still, calm atmosphere, that will allow a lucifer match to be lighted, listening to the roaring of the wind below. The very nature of the vegetation, consisting, as it does, chiefly of decayed tree-ferns, which anything like a breeze would inevitably uproot, proves the perpetual calm that reigns there. Contrary to the usual rule, the air on the summit of Diana’s Peak is so much warmer than it is a short distance below as to cause a very unpleasant chill to be sometimes experienced on descending.

Possessing, as it does, a climate that allows the cultivation of almost every vegetable product, of both the temperate and tropical zones, it might be expected that agriculture in the island would be both easy and profitable. Such, however, is not the case: whether it be that the system of farming pursued is defective, or that the climate is too hot for one class of plants and too cold for the other, or whatever the real cause may be, certain it is that the farmer, in general, reaps but little for his labour. One or two

reasons for his want of success may be hinted at. If a man plants a fruit-tree, and leaves it thenceforth to take care of itself, it can't be expected to go on for ever producing annually an abundant crop of first-rate quality. One often hears it said at St. Helena that fruits which formerly thrived there will not do so now; the real fact being that the old trees have deteriorated or died out, whilst no new ones have been planted. Again, labour is expensive and manure scarce. The bulk of the population living in Jamestown, the greater part of the sewage is carried out to sea and irretrievably lost. There is, too, a difficulty, as regards the small farmers, in selling garden produce, owing to a particular firm having succeeded, of late years, in practically monopolizing the business of furnishing supplies to passing ships; this firm owning extensive farms that produce all that is required for the purpose.

Coffee grows well where protected from the wind, and is of remarkably good quality; but there is only one regular plantation of it on the island. An enterprising gentleman has, for some years past, been carrying on the cultivation of aloe and New Zealand flax, and the manufacture from them of hemp; and it is to be hoped that his praiseworthy endeavours may eventually be crowned with success. The most important step towards utilizing the waste land of the island was, however, that of Sir C. Elliot, the late Governor, who recently introduced the cultivation of cinchona as a government experiment. So far the young plants appear to thrive well, and plantations of them are being formed, under the superintendence of an experienced gentleman from Kew, on the slopes of Diana's Peak, on ground formerly covered with native forest.

Without entering into any details as to the geology of the island, it may be mentioned that the place is of purely volcanic origin, and that the only useful minerals that are found there are a calcareous sand and black oxide of manganese. The former occurs in beds in a few spots, and was formerly burnt for lime. The latter was only recently discovered, and is of good quality. But the cost of working it, transporting it to the coast, and sending it to England more than counterbalances its market value.

The fauna of St. Helena is very scanty, and only one species of land bird (*Charadrius pecuarius*) appears to be a true native. But this one has the peculiarity of having never yet been found in any other part of the world. The islanders called it the "Wire Bird." It is a pretty little thing, very lively in its motions, and more like a sandpiper than a plover. The rock-pigeon, a dove from Australia, and a few species of the finch family are common, and a scattered remnant of the Indian minah exists. The ring-necked pheasant (*Phasianus torquatus*) was introduced from China by the Portuguese, and would be very abundant were it allowed to increase. The only other game-bird is a partridge, closely resembling the Himalayan "Chuckore" and its allied African and European varieties, which is to be met with in large numbers all round the sea-cliffs and barren outer zone. On these cliffs, also, are thousands of a beautiful little tern-like bird with plumage of the purest white (*Cygis candida*):

they are locally known as "White Birds," and fly in a most fearless manner round and round the heads of any chance intruders on their haunts. Other species of sea-birds, chiefly of the tern and petrel families, are to be met with on the coast cliffs. The most remarkable among them is the graceful "Boatswain" or "Tropic" bird (*Phaeton aethereus*), which inhabits certain favourite spots on the faces of the most inaccessible precipices, and is much sought after for the sake of its delicate black and white plumage, used for ornamenting ladies' hats.

Of quadrupeds, there are only the rabbit, a rat, and a mouse: the two former certainly, and the latter probably, introduced. The rats are long-haired, and have a partiality for climbing trees, while the mice positively swarm all over the country. The same may be said, as far as regards the barren parts, of the one St. Helena reptile—a little brown lizard; as also of centipedes, bugs, fleas, two species of mosquitoes (one of which feeds by day and the other by night), and, in a lesser degree, a small brown scorpion. In connection with the fauna of the island, must be mentioned the fish which inhabit the shallow waters immediately surrounding its shores, and of which there is an immense variety, some of the species being known elsewhere, others peculiar to the place. Fish and rice form the principal food of the great bulk of the population, and when the supply of either runs short great distress ensues. The kinds most depended on are the albacore and mackerel, and, occasionally, in seasons of scarcity, the bonita. Turtle are sometimes caught; and some kind of fish are as delicate in flavour as the most fastidious epicure could desire.

Pheasant and partridge shooting is restricted by law to six weeks in the year, and a game licence has to be taken out. The Governor may, at any time, suspend these licences altogether, should he deem it necessary; and within the last few years this has frequently been done, for certain of the islanders, while the season lasts, wage such ceaseless war on the unfortunate pheasants, both cocks and hens, that the race would soon become extinct were a longer period allowed. The partridges are, however, very wild and wary, and might with advantage be shot more than they are. It is almost impossible to approach within range of them openly; and to kill them at all, regular shooting-parties have to be organized. The ordinary plan pursued is for one or more sets of guns to advance in line over a certain pre-arranged beat, and drive the birds either amongst cliffs, where they become more approachable, or into some rocky ravine. In the latter case when the drive has been made, the guns enter the gorge low down, form a line on its sides, and advance up it. The partridges, finding themselves pent in, fly down, sometimes in an almost continuous stream, over the shooters' heads; the tremendous pace which they thus acquire rendering it, however, very difficult to hit them. This partridge-shooting is very hard work, the birds being found chiefly on the most precipitous cliffs and hillsides, whence they have to be driven. New-comers from England generally find themselves deficient at first, both in sureness of foot and in

steadiness of head, and it requires considerable practice to enable them to keep up with the islanders on a difficult beat. As a rule, the worse the ground the more numerous the birds; and it is no uncommon thing to see a fresh arrival helplessly stuck on the face of a cliff and afraid to move hand or foot, whilst the partridges are rising all round him, and, of course, getting away unhurt. The heat of the sun, striking down on and reflected from the rocks, adds much to the fatigue of this sport; but those who work the hardest always get the most shots, owing to the birds lying closer on difficult than on easy ground.

Out of the shooting season tropic birds occasionally afford sport to the officers of the garrison and others. These birds are found in a few places—generally very difficult of access—on the windward side of the island. The easiest to reach is the cliff known as “Great Stone Top,” a conical mass of rock, 1,700 feet in height, and rising almost vertically from the sea. On one of its flanks the cliff is absolutely perpendicular, and at a short distance down its face is a deep horizontal cut or cave in which the birds live. Any one who does not mind standing on the very edge of the precipice may usually make sure of having several shots, but the birds all fall into the ravine a thousand feet below, and it is necessary to have boys down there ready to look out and pick them up.

The windward side of the island abounds with the grandest rock scenery. It would well repay an artist to visit a few of the most remote spots, and bring away with him correct representations of effects that may be seen there every day. The brilliancy of the colouring, comprising, as each view does, the very deepest blue water, generally flecked by a few white spots in the shape of distant passing ships, and the grandest precipices of the most gorgeous and varied tints, is such as is never seen in the hazy atmospheres of our northern latitudes, while the pure white plumage of the countless sea-birds serves to intensify the colouring and give life to the scene.

To those who love what is beautiful in nature, and who have leisure to visit these remote spots when they wish, life at St. Helena need never seem wearisome. And although the island is so small, it takes a long time to become acquainted with it thoroughly. It is so cut up and intersected by deep ravines that it is impossible to visit much of it in any one day; and, even making an expedition once a week to explore some new locality of interest, it takes quite a year to exhaust the place,

Before quitting this part of the subject, two remarkable rocks in the Sandy Bay amphitheatre, known as “Lot” and “Lot’s Wife,” deserve to be noticed. They form portions of enormous dykes of “phonolite” crossing the great crater, their hard structure having caused them to remain standing after the softer portions of rock had been removed by the process of denudation. Each of these rocks rises abruptly from the crest of a ridge; the former is conical, about 400 ft. in height, and looks almost inaccessible; but it, in reality, presents no great difficulty to an experienced climber. “Lot’s Wife” is a single vertical shaft, 270 ft. from base to summit.

The main events of life at St. Helena are the arrivals of the monthly mail-steamers from England, and the occasional visits of men-of-war of different nations; those belonging to the British squadron on the West Coast of Africa touch at the island about once a year, and spend three weeks or a month there, for the sake of giving their crews a little amusement. In addition to these, there is always a constant succession of vessels of all nations, either passing the island, or calling there for supplies; and few are the days on which some are not signalled. But the annual visit of the flag-ship of the coast squadron is the greatest excitement of the year. Then, and then only, the inhabitants shake off the lethargy produced by the monotony of their ordinary existence, and dinner-parties, balls, and picnics become the order of the day.

A propos to the dulness of the place, it has often been remarked that people generally dislike it extremely at first, but grow very fond of it after residing there for a time. Perhaps military men like it least of all. The garrison at present kept up is a wing of infantry, a battery of artillery, and a company of engineers. It was formerly much larger. A number of old forts and batteries, forming a chain of defences round the coast, were rendered useless by the introduction of men-of-war steamers, and were consequently abandoned; and, more recently, the greater part of the artillery armament has been concentrated in the batteries already mentioned as defending the anchorage.

The present population of the island is about 7,000. The great mass of the inhabitants are a coloured race, of mixed European and Asiatic descent. They are, as a rule, very poor; but are well educated for their position, civil in their deportment, and harmless, though rather effeminate in their habits. There are also a few negroes on the island, the descendants of slaves brought over by our cruisers in captured slave-ships and liberated. Considering the smallness both of the population and revenue, a very large civil establishment is kept up. There is a governor, assisted by a colonial secretary, and a Queen's advocate; a bishop, judge, colonial engineer, and stipendiary magistrate, besides divers other officials—all well paid. The revenue is, at present, barely sufficient to meet current expenses.

Possessing, as it does, no export trade, and with little chance of ever having any, the very existence of the colony may be said to depend on homeward-bound vessels calling there; and, with the prospect of the number of those that do so yearly diminishing, it cannot be said that the future of St. Helena looks very bright. Great losses have also been caused by the ravages of the white ants, which have of late years, by destroying the woodwork of the houses, literally laid Jamestown in ruins, and compelled both private individuals and Government to incur enormous expenses in rebuilding the different edifices with materials that the insect cannot touch.

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HE STOOD AS THOUGH I HAD STABBED HIM, BUT DID NOT ATTEMPT TO DETAIN ME.

Out of the Forest.

A STORY OF HUNGARY.

I.



AM Elspet Reitck, born in the Bakonywald, where I have lived all my life—that is just seventeen years to-morrow, and I have promised the good Father to write down my story. He has given it me as a little penance to help me to be less thoughtless and more grateful to the good God who has made me so happy; for I am very happy to-night, so glad and thankful, and so full of a great joy that is singing always at my

heart, that I should not mind any penance, however disagreeable, even if it was to go to the Calvarienberg on my knees, or to give my new ribbons and the old silver clasps for the shrine of Our Lady. Yes, I think I should not like quite to have to do that, because—because of something that is to happen to-morrow! But, oh dear! that is why I am so happy: it can hardly be a penance to tell how it all came to pass, and yet I shall cry before I have finished my story; cry with pity for myself, I was so very very miserable, and it seemed so sad for life to be all spoilt and over when one was only sixteen, and there would be so many weary years to be dragged through by a poor little girl, who would grow quickly into a sad old woman with a white face, and eyes which could never smile because her heart was dead. I thought some one had killed mine then.

I remember so well that first evening after I came back from Pressberg. Father had gone out to bed up the horses, for he had the care of the stables that belonged to the good Fathers, and of all the horses that were needed for the forest work; mother was mixing the meal for

supper, and Annerl was busy with her pigs in the little back yard. I was standing in the shadow of the doorway, where I had been waiting for half-an-hour, my heart beating with joy at the thought that soon—now—in a moment, I might really see Guztav. How well I remember what he looked like as he came slowly under the great trees, like a young pine, I thought, so straight and strong and tall, holding his head high, and looking out before him with those great blue eyes that often seemed to me too busy with their own thoughts to read other people's, or see what was passing in the world around him. I shouted "Guztav! Guztav!" He started, with a little sudden cry of delight, and hurried towards the house; but I could not wait, I had been waiting so long, and I had wanted him so much all these years; he had been my dear brother all my life; he had called me his little sister many and many a time, and so with all my glad heart in my face, and with outstretched hands, I ran to him and threw myself on his neck, and, foolish little Elspet, really cried, I was so glad to have him again. But he didn't kiss me or hold me tight, as he ought to have done; he coloured all over his face and looked awkward and uncomfortable; he took my two hands and mumbled something, and asked me whether I wasn't very tired after my journey. *Tired when I had him!* Men are so stupid. Something in my throat hurt me; I grew hot and cold by turns; my heart beat; I should have cried again if I had not been too angry. "You do not care to have me; you are not happy because I have come back; you said I should be your little sister always; you are changed, and hardened, and spoilt; you are like a piece of wood, and oh! I am so dreadfully disappointed." I couldn't help saying that, and then, before he could answer, I ran away from him lest I should burst out sobbing and he should see. How I wished I had not kissed him!

I went to Annerl Demegerrat, who was feeding her pigs: she took no notice of me when I opened the little door of the back yard; she was saying "chuck, chuck, chuck," and the great hungry creatures were pushing towards the troughs, grunting and squealing, as they thrust each other aside in their eagerness. I had never felt so cross with the pigs before. Annerl poured their food out of the pails she had brought from the house: she was a tall thin woman, who never seemed to grow old, and had never been any younger as far back as I could remember. She had a very uncomfortable face and an uncomfortable voice—a voice that seemed full of protest, with a wail of complaint in it, as though she had never had a really good cry about her troubles and got it over.

Annerl Demegerrat was father's half-sister; she had been married, but I never remember hearing anything about her husband, only Guztav and I had a fancy of our own when we were little, that he had been a miller, and was very fat and big, with a red face, and that he was always laughing, and died of apoplexy: we made it up for ourselves, and told it to each other till we quite believed it. Annerl always had a white handkerchief tied round her jaw, as though she had the toothache, and I remember we used to think she wore it as a mark of respect to the miller's memory, and

that somehow it was a sign of mourning. Annerl's one happiness was her pigs; she was swineherd to the great Convent at St. Martinsberg—our St. Martinsberg, to which we all belong—and had a melancholy pride in her title and her occupation, but was perfectly hopeless about everything else. She was the last person to whom at another time I should have complained of my trouble, but I could not keep silent, and provoked with her because she would not notice me, but still cried, "chuck, chuck, chuck," I said suddenly, "I had forgotten how ugly pigs were; they look horrid, with their frizzy hair and their little mean eyes and their dirt; everything is horrid in the country; I wish I had stayed at Pressberg, I wish I had never come home."

It was mean of me to say that about the pigs, and I hated myself for it.

Annerl emptied her last pail, and then turned round and looked at me with the curious slow stare which was one of her characteristics.

"It don't matter," she said, "where you go or where you stay, 'tis a dismal world at the best; there isn't any sure comfort in it but the pigs. If you get to care about a child, it 'll wear your life out fretting; if you set your heart on the flowers the fowls 'll scratch them up, or if they grow and you gather them, they are limp and faded and good for nothing directly. But my pigs are always a pleasure: if you only feed them they grow fat and do you credit: they are pictures to gladden your eyes while they're living, and when they're dead every bit of them is good for something. When I'm very low and feel I'm not wanted, I shut my eyes and think of the pork, and the pig's fry, and the fat bacon, and that helps me. Elspet," she said with sudden energy, "you don't know what real trouble is, but I do." Poor Annerl, I thought with self-reproach, she must have been fond of that red-faced miller.

"When there was a talk of that measles at Raab, and they said it was spreading in the villages, and even in the forest, I said six *aves* at every station, and twelve *credos*, and went on my knees all the way to the Calvarienberg, to pray the blessed saints to let me take it and spare the pigs. They didn't heed me, 'twasn't likely they would, I'm of no account, I know: the pigs took it, and twenty-five of the biggest and fattest died. I thought it would have killed me, for I loved them; and besides, it went to my heart to bury all that bacon."

Annerl's voice was so melancholy, and her face so utterly dismal as she spoke, that she did me good directly. There are some people who are so dismal they make you feel merry by contrast, and perhaps that is their way of being useful. I shook the tears from my eyes and laughed at her, and then begged her pardon, and helped to carry the empty buckets into the house.

Father had come by this time, and he and Guztav were sitting at the table. Mother put the supper down and bade us begin. Father said his prayer, and finished with, "God bless Elspet," and then I felt sorry I had been so cross, and the thought that I was *really* at home again made me happy; besides, Guztav had said "Amen" with a kind, glad voice, and

mother had kissed me as she put the porridge into my plate, and said—“ Eat a spoonful, little daughter; thou must eat first, that brings good luck: when one has been on a journey, half one's heart is gone, but when one has tasted the old home food, then one forgets the past, and one begins to live well in the old house.”

“ It is so good, mother,” I said; “ nobody makes porridge like you, and I would rather be here than anywhere in the world.”

“ A crust tastes better under one's own roof than sugared cakes amongst strangers,” said mother; “ there's no comfort to my mind in eating when one has to say 'May it please you,' and 'I thank your graciousness,' with every bite: plain fare and plain folk and plenty of love in the sauce-bowl, and I'll warrant one will stomach the food. But what in the name of all the saints has come to Anerl?” cried mother, as she turned and saw her sitting on a stool in the farthest corner. The stool had lost a leg, and was tilted against the wall, and Anerl had to lean on one side to balance it; her hands were crossed on her lap, and her head hung dolefully on her breast.

“ Ah! good people,” she said, “ don't mind me; don't let a poor, melancholy object spoil your appetites. I know I'm not wanted, and I know my place; the crumbs from your table, only the crumbs, sister-in-law, till I join my poor Josef in heaven: once, it is true, I had flour-mills, but that is over, crumbs now satisfy the poor dependant.”

“ Heaven send me patience!” cried mother; “ come to the table, Anerl, and never mind the mills; there's porridge enough and to spare for us and ours.”

“ I wouldn't wish to take it from Elspet,” said Anerl, without raising her head; “ a daughter's right place is at home, and I don't grudge it her. I pray the good St. Antony to shorten my days, for I know I'm a burden, and a desolation, and a weak weary woman that'll not try your patience long.”

“ Fiddlesticks!” said mother; “ there's your place and your porridge, that'll cool sooner than your welcome, as you might know by this time.”

Father rose, and taking Anerl's arm, quietly put her into the seat beside him, saying kindly, “ We won't cry over the meal to-day, sister-in-law; there's more in the barrel, and it's the child's first night at home.”

Mother put down Anerl's plate—it was the fullest of all—but though she said, “ A good digestion to you, sister-in-law,” she couldn't help hitting the table with it, which made Anerl jump. Father is so gentle, but mother and I must say just what comes first, and if we mayn't speak we can't keep quiet; but father is just like the blessed saints—nothing but good words ever come from his lips: all the dumb beasts love him.

When Anerl jumped I looked at Guztav, and we both laughed. He was ashamed of having laughed, but I was pleased to have made him. I always could when we were little; after that I began to feel quite comfortable, and as though I had never been away at all. After supper we all sat on the bench under the big beech-tree, and sang our old songs

together. Father has a beautiful voice still, though it is not quite so rich and true as it once was. Mother sings too, and I sing and Guztav, and he plays on a violin, oh ! such heavenly music, that the birds stop their singing to listen ; and Annerl sings a little, only her voice is cracked, and thin ; she always expects to be asked to sing every time we begin, and then makes a great many excuses, which is a little troublesome, because we like to sing out of our hearts without talking about it. Our Hongarisch songs are beautiful, and Guztav had learnt many new ones from the Zigeuners, who had also taught him to play fresh pieces of music—music that told you a whole long story, and made you cry and laugh as it pleased : sometimes the violin would scream like an angry spirit, as though it was dying of rage and its soul was bursting away ; then it would talk with low, pleading voices, and grow comforted and pass into peaceful smiling sunshine, with long, sweet thrills of rest ; then one heard little panting, sobbing words of love and entreaty, and songs like those the summer brooks sing in the forest, and then far away hymns of joy, till one's heart ached with the sweetness, while the notes soared into the heavens and fell softly through the air like a star. Guztav had been far into the country, amongst the Zigeuners, buying horses for the good Fathers : everybody knows how clever they are in taming them. He had wonderful tales to tell us of his adventures, and of the wild people and their ways. Mother said they were always a handsome, brave race. I had seen them at Pressberg, where a band of strolling singers had come to the cafés, and my aunt had taken me and Caterina to hear them. There was a young girl belonging to them whom we thought the most beautiful creature we had ever seen. Caterina had said to me, “Are all the Zigeuner women as beautiful ?” I remembered that now, but I said nothing, only wondered a little whether Guztav had thought so.

For several weeks after that I was very busy and happy ; I felt good and pleased with myself ; I helped mother in the dairy, for we had a great many cows to look after—a large herd that were pastured in the lowlands round us. All the butter and cream father carried twice a week to the great Convent of St. Martinsberg ; we were its servants and vassals, as father's father and grandfathers had been for hundreds of years. There was a lay brother who came down sometimes to see that things were going right, and to count the beasts and look to the horses, but for the most part it was all left to us, for the good monks know we are to be trusted. Our house was large for peasants, and strongly “built ; indeed the poorer people about us called father “farmer” and “master-overlooker,” he was so much respected ; and besides, so many of the wood-cutters, and the charcoal-burners, were under his orders, and the teamsters, and if one of the bullocks was ill, it was always he who was applied to.

One day father said the wagon was to go to Raab the next morning, and as he wanted a message taken to the landlord of the “Goldene Krone,” Guztav might as well drive it, and I should go too and look after the cheeses, for there were a great many ready for market. If father was a

kind of bailiff to the Convent, Guztav was bailiff to father, and so they did everything together.

Guztav said, "Do come, Elspet," and then he coloured and pretended to busy himself with some sacks of meal.

I wanted to go, but I thought he might have said something more about it, so I said I was very busy, and I didn't know whether mother could spare me.

"That's a pity," said father; but Guztav wouldn't speak.

"The child can go well enough," cried mother, who came in at the moment.

"I don't think I care to go. I'm sure I don't—and I'm busy;" and I took up the pile of plates for supper, and passed Guztav and his sacks without looking at him.

"Well, then, send Annerl," said father.

"Won't you go, Elspet?" said a pleading voice under the sack.

"Annerl may go and welcome for me," I cried; "but she knows nothing about cheese, and you said, mother, she was the worst hand at a bargain you ever met, her mind's set on nothing but bacon; but I don't mind: if you wish her to go, and she sells the cheeses at half their value, the loss is the good Fathers': only it's a pity when they're such fine ones; but of course if you *want* to send Annerl——"

Father stared with a puzzled look in his eyes. "I don't want to send Annerl; I thought Elspet would like a day's pleasure, and to sell her cheeses herself."

"Eh, eh, father!" said mother, laughing, "don't worry thyself by too much thinking; hast never seen the silly young calves when thou art feeding them? they never care for the milk till they've knocked the bucket over!"

"Of course I must sell the cheeses," I said; "if it's my place to go I'm quite ready; but as for the pleasure!"—and then I kissed father on both cheeks ever so many times, and felt such a little hypocrite, and so much obliged to him for helping me in spite of myself.

We started before the sun was up in the morning. I lit a fire and boiled some milk while Guztav harnessed the horses, and I helped him pack the cheese in the waggon with plenty of soft hay, and then climbed to the seat in front, where he wrapped me up so carefully in the great sheepskins, for it was autumn and the mornings and evenings were cold. We had to drive slowly at first, for the wood roads were bad for the horses' feet, with their loose stones and roots of trees, and were narrow too in places, and better fitted for the quiet bullock-teams than for our horses, who were driven three abreast, and danced and jumped about, being in high spirits with the freshness of the air and the pleasure of a holiday; for the waggon was so light that it was as much of a holiday for them as for me: so we were all happy together. Guztav and I chatted and sang, and he told me wonderful gipsy stories, and listened with the greatest interest to my tales of the life in Pressberg, and of the polite

manners of the people and the grand two-storied houses, and of cousin Caterina ; and I told him about the pretty Zigeuner maiden, and he said they had all the same dark eyes and hair, beautiful eyes like moonlight nights, and somehow then I liked to hear him, because I have black eyes too. We talked and talked just as we used to do about everything that came into our heads—about the games we played when we were children, about the black mare that had sprained her fetlock, and old Czjzek who had thrown out a fresh spavin and was really getting past work, and the quality of the maize, and the new cow father had bought, and the harvest-service they would have at the Convent, and what a gay dance it would be this year, because the crops were so heavy ; and I told Guztav that the hen-wife at St. Martinsberg had promised me a sitting of eggs, and I meant to rear some chickens of my own ; the Madonna should have one for candles, but I meant to save all the rest of my money for new ribbons at Christmas ; and then we talked about Anerl, and laughed at her doleful stories, and wondered whether she could ever have been merry and young.

“ She couldn’t have had her face tied up in a handkerchief when she was a baby,” said Guztav, “ and she wouldn’t look half so doleful without that.”

“ Oh, but she did, you may depend on it,” I cried ; “ she says she wears it for the toothache : I think she began it when she was cutting one, and she must have been just six months old ; ” and then we both laughed, so that the horses shied and plunged about wildly and Guztav had to pull the reins hard, and said, “ We must be serious, little one, or we shall never get through our business.”

Oh, how pleased I was to hear him call me “ little one ” again ; it was all just like before I went away ; but I said, “ Little one, indeed, Herr Waggoner ! I am Mistress Cheese-Saleswoman to-day, and am to be treated with respect.”

On which Guztav looked at me, smiling : he couldn’t speak, because he wanted all his breath for the horses, but something in his eyes made me colour—it was very stupid of me. So I fixed my mind firmly on the cheese, and tried not to remember it ; and when the road grew better, and the horses went more quietly, I opened a basket and gave Guztav a great piece of black bread ; for the fresh air, or the laughter, or the early start, or all three together, had made us hungry, and the drive seemed quite to have changed Guztav : he wasn’t silent at all, or shy, or stupid, he treated me as if I were really little again, and might be ordered about ; and when I gave him the bread, he said I must feed him, because the horses pulled so he wanted both hands for the reins, and he was too hungry to wait : so I gave him great bits, as though he had been a chicken, or an old hen, and when the waggon bumped suddenly, I hit his nose or his chin by mistake ; but he didn’t mind that, and it only made us both laugh the more. When we came in sight of Raab, and the houses, and the church towers, I made my face look very grave,

and puckered my forehead, that I might look old and clever, and show people that I was not to be imposed upon, and Guztav gave all his mind to the horses, and made his long whip crack beautifully as we dashed through the town. We both felt very important and anxious, for Guztav had a great deal to settle with the landlord, and I had all that cheese on my mind.

II.

It was past noon before all our business was well over, and then we were hungry again, and were ready for dinner. They gave us a beautiful meal in the second hall at the "Hotel Krone." There was one big room filled with little tables, at which the visitors sat—gentlemen and ladies, and very many Hungarian officers and high officials. While we waited it was very amusing to see all the people who came in and out of the hall, and called for wine and food: travellers in strange foreign dresses, peasants, like ourselves, from the forest, boatmen and dealers from the river, huntsmen in gay liveries, and the shopkeepers of the town, who came in to dine together at a long table. The landlord had invited us to stay and eat as his guests, being a kind-hearted man and pleased with his bargain, which if it had been good for us was good for him too.

"A trusted servant of the good Fathers of St. Martinsberg has always a welcome here, so drink the health of the little cheesewoman in some good red wine, and eat your fill, and my humble greetings to their Reverences."

There was a very grand company at the table—the apothecary, and the doctor, and the seedsman, and a jäger from Castle Z—, and two or three soldiers, and four lay brothers who dined off vegetables and put the meat in their pockets, because, though it was a fast day, they might still enjoy it on the morrow. We did not think much of them, for they belonged to the monastery in the town, and we were vassals of the great Convent, and looked down on the Raab monks; for our abbot is like a prince-bishop, and all the lands as far as you can see belong to St. Martinsberg. I sat by a good woman from Waitzen, whose mind was full of trouble about her son, who had been mixed up in a fight, and was now in prison. She cried now and then as she talked to me, and wiped her eyes very often with her napkin, although her tears fell faster than ever when the brown bread-pudding with the eggs was placed upon the table, as she said it was her poor darling's favourite dish; she had a second helping of it, but that was, perhaps, for her dear boy's sake.

"Keep a good heart, mistress," said the little seedsman across the table: "I wish you good speed, and success to your son," and he emptied his glass.

"I thank you truly," answered my neighbour; "but what can you expect? He has offended against the law, that is too true, and the law has him. It is just as when one snuffs out a candle, puff! one is held fast, and the light and brightness is over."

"Get the saints to help thee, or a holy Father; there's more ways than one of lighting a candle again. Why, a friend of mine lost ever so many of her hens, and she vowed sixteen candles to the Blessed Mary, and a cushion stuffed with pig's-hair, and put a fresh padlock on her yard door, and she never lost as much as a feather afterwards."

"Ah!" said the Waitzen woman, "that may be; but it isn't much good to me, for we're Protestants, and have nought to do with your candles and *aves*."

"What's the odds?" said the little seedsman; "our Lady's as kind a soul as ever lived; besides, she'd do you a good turn and never miss it. Take a new sitting of eggs to your monastery, and get one of the Fathers to consider the matter, or find out who is the judge's mother-in-law, and whether she likes honey. Bless the woman, don't fret, keep up your appetite, and say an *ave*, and use your wits—that's my creed, and you'll get along somehow."

Guztav whispered to me that the seedsman was not to be depended on. He had a good digestion, and believed in nothing, and talked like that to make people think he was clever.

I think no one should speak of our Blessed Lady with a jest; people should love her all the more because she is so good, and not try to impose upon her. I said so to Gustav, but only in a low voice, because I was afraid of the seedsman, and of speaking before so many people.

The apothecary told funny stories about the Viennese, whom he knew intimately, having studied chemistry for a year in Austria, and being able to talk German with ease. I should be ashamed to talk German—no true Magyar would wish to; but still the apothecary's stories were very amusing: and then he had seen our beautiful Queen, walking simply in the Prater, and holding her little son by the hand. Ah, holy saint Elizabeth! how I love her. My heart seemed to grow warm as he spoke, and I longed to cry, "God bless her!" Guztav drank to her health, and I said "Amen" to myself, like a little prayer, when he put down his glass.

When dinner was over we went into the town and looked at the shop windows; they were not very gay, but in one there were some prints for sale, and, to our great delight, we found a picture of Annerl's "St. Antony," such a quaint, odd picture—a very old man with a crutch and a long beard, and a very little black pig by his side, like a feeble old swineherd who had grown good enough to go to heaven. There was a bright glory round his head like the sun, and as we were so happy we determined to be extravagant, and we bought the little picture. I had a silver piece to give, and Guztav paid the rest. It was for Annerl to hang by her bed.

Then we set out for a long walk by the promenade and streets and the old fortifications, walking slowly and stopping often to look about us, and talking as we went. At last we came to the side of the river where

the old wall made a resting-place, with some steps that led down right into the water. I sat on the highest step, and Guztav lay on the grass beside me ; he took out his pipe and lighted it, and we made little jokes together and were very merry, and he smoked silently and I sang softly little children's songs half to myself and half to him, listening to the splash of oars as boats came by idly drifting down the stream. How long we stayed there I cannot tell, but the sunlight which had been warm upon my head at first, grew fainter and drew away quietly into the sky, where it deepened and reddened, and fell with a golden glory on us again. Guztav's yellow hair shone like gold, and his face was bright like the angel who comes to Tobit in the picture of the Convent chapel ; there was a new look in his eyes, he put his pipe on the grass and laid his hand on one of mine that rested on the step beside him. I felt half frightened : a strange joy crept into my heart, which fluttered suddenly like a little caged bird. I could not turn away from him, though I did not want to see his face, nor try to think what it told me. What little wind there had been all day had fallen and there was a great hush and stillness over everything—that tender peacefulness which only comes when the tired day is going to sleep and night is hiding her gently, covering her with her cloud-curtains and singing her to rest ; a pale light, soft as a primrose, filled the sky and held its sweetness like a prayer ; tender roseate clouds sailed slowly towards each other and grew together and deepened into purple islands that caught fire from the dying sunlight, and blazed along their edges and sent little quivering flashes of light upon the river, where red and violet and golden ripples chased each other into dark corners, and changed their tints and brightness with the changing movement of the water and the clouds. Suddenly a nightingale from the bushes near us sent out a long, low note, and then a plaintive trill of music, a little sad lonely jug, jug, jug ! and then a clear sweet song of uttermost love and happiness, that soared far up into the air and then fell back softly, like gentle, blessed dew upon my heart. I could not bear it ; I had been so often cross and impatient, fretting against my life, and now it was as though my guardian angel was coming to me in the silence, and that in her hands was a censer full of perfect joy. I put my head down on Guztav's hand still holding mine, and cried for very happiness, and Guztav kissed me—very softly : his lips just touched my hair, and I think he said, "Dear little heart, I will love thee so truly, so help me God !" and I looked up at him with my face all wet, and saw his dear honest eyes full of tears too, and I answered, "I never remember the time, Guztav, that I did not love thee."

Then he kissed me on my mouth with a grave earnest face, and we sat there silently, only the nightingale spoke for us, each to the other ; and the great red sun sank lower and lower, and as the light faded Guztav and I knelt down hand in hand on the grass by the old broken wall, by the reeds and the water-lilies, and said our *ave*, and I thought

that the angels were saying theirs too, and that perhaps even our Blessed Lady cared, and was glad that little Elspet was so happy.

And then it was time to harness the horses, and we went back to the "Goldene Krone." I don't think that either of us said a word as we drove home through the forest. It was very odd, but it did not seem so to me then.

III.

Ah ! I wish I might stop here ; I should like best not to write another word but just of prayer and thanksgiving. I don't know how to tell of the weeks that followed that one bright, golden day of my life when I sold my cheeses ! All the days after were like a still sweet dream. It was not that our lives went on differently from what they had been before ; there were still the cows to be milked and butter to be made, and the meals to be got ready, and Guztav was busy with the horses and the farm-work, only somehow the golden light I had seen in the sky and the water as we watched the sunset by the Danube seemed to live in my eyes and make everything beautiful. When I was making the butter the churn said, "Guztav loves you, loves you, loves you ;" the kettle sang it on the fire ; the birds put it in their songs when they were the sweetest ; my own heart said it always through the stillness, and the whole world seemed full of light and joy. And then I was so proud of Guztav, not most because he was stronger and taller and handsomer than any of the young men of the forest, but because, with all his strength, he was so gentle and so good to those who were weak and ailing and unhappy ; so patient with Annerl, who always aggravated me, and so watchful over father, saving him all the hard work he could, and letting father think he was as vigorous as ever, because the strong, loving arm helped him so quietly, he only saw the joint labour and rejoiced in it without knowing who had borne the greater toil. Mother was never one you could do for, but I liked to see how much she thought of him, and how she loved to measure his height against any of the lads at the harvesting, and to hear her say, "Our Guztav would be a rare pole for a vineyard, and any plant that's tied to him will find shelter and sunshine ;" and then she would give my ear a little pinch or stroke my head, and we both knew what little vine meant to grow there, and how bright and glad it would be.

Sometimes, when I began to think, I would sit still and let the knitting fall on my lap and dream as though all the world were asleep ; but oftener I wanted to be always running about singing and laughing and talking to everybody because I was so happy.

Father would say, "Why, Elspet, my darling, thy sunny face will save candles for winter !" and mother would look at me with a shrewd kindly smile.

"'Tis easy to see where the oil comes from that keeps that little wick burning : shine away, Elspet, it'll hold out like the widow's cruse,

and the more you use it the more there'll be. I've kept a light burning many a year and it's never grown dim yet, eh! father?"

And mother would kiss me, and father, with his hands in mine, would say, "The Lord has been very good to us, and the candle that He has lighted He will sure gladly see brightening in heaven."

"Amen," said mother; "but not yet awhile, please the saints: there'll be wax-lights in the old sockets, never fear, when we get up yonder. I'm not so pious but what I'd use every bit of it here, and well I know it'll last our time; and as for the young things who've but just lit their taper, why they've got the light in their eyes, and think it's just the biggest illumination ever mortals heard of. Ah! there've been moths and candles since the beginning of creation, and there's no likelihood of either coming to an end that I see."

"Pork-fat, sister-in-law," said Annerl, in her slow voice, breaking into our talk—"pork-fat well strained and poured into moulds will make them beautiful, six to the pound: they're fit for St. Bridget herself; but what is there those blessed pigs ain't good for!"

"You do find them a consolation most times, sister-in-law," said mother grimly; "and I won't deny that fresh bacon of our own feeding is wholesome eating."

And then Guztav would look in for a moment before going to the faggot-pile, and so I would draw my hand away from father's and run out to collect the billets for the fire, and Guztav and I would forget all about them and stand by the wood-pile looking at each other, and pouring a great deal of fresh oil on our two lamps. They burnt so steadily with such a true pure brightness: ah! how little I could have thought of the darkness that was so near!

One day Annerl, who had been to the great Convent with fresh eggs, came in to the living-room just as we were all sitting down to supper; she looked more wobegone than ever, and her voice had a deeper gloom in it.

"You're tired," father said kindly; "it's a long walk, Annerl: didn't the hen-wife ask you in and let you rest?"

"It's not my body, brother-in-law, it's my mind," she answered. "As I went in at the yard-door I saw a picture that reminded me of the past: there was a young girl sitting on a door-step, singing and feeding the fowls; on her shoulder stood a little chicken pecking at the spotted neckerchief she wore, and as she threw the grain to the greedy creatures she sang. Just so, brother-in-law, I sat a many many years ago singing to the chickens, when I first saw the miller in the door-way—my poor Josef, white as the angels and carrying a sack like a begging-friar! I looked at the girl; she was young and gay just as I was then; I had worn a neckerchief of that very pattern, and it might have been I who sat there and sang and sang;" and Annerl in her cracked voice began to sing, rocking herself backwards and forwards in mournful accompaniment to the rhythm;—

We may spin and weave, and cry over the thread,
 For weary goes the world, a-weary !
 Men take our spinning and forget the hearts that bled,
 Forget the busy hands till they're all cold and dead,
 And weary goes the world, and dreary.

"Do you mean she really sang anything so doleful as that to a chicken ? What a shame ! It was enough to take away its appetite. Are you sure it pecked afterwards ?" I asked Annerl, pertly enough.

Annerl shook her head sorrowfully. "It was I who sang that, a long time ago to another chicken, and it died with the pip the day after ! I was always unlucky and worn and weary ; but I eat my bread thankfully with a heavy heart, and if it's bitter I know it's my portion."

"Bitter ! sister-in-law," said mother, fairly in a pet. "I won't pretend that brown bread's the same as white loaves, though you may look at it through the millman's spectacles ; but if you ever find a sour batch of *my* baking I'll eat the crust to my own portion : my bread is as sweet and as wholesome as Saint Elizabeth's, and maybe more nourishing into the bargain, seeing that her flour, however it was mixed, turned to nought but roses. Thou'rt welcome to all thou can take, Annerl, as many's the time thou'st heard it ; but never say the spoon thou'rt eating from is made of bad metal, or maybe some day thou'l find it has stuck to the pot !"

"I spoke in a spiritual sense, sister-in-law," said Annerl between sobs ; "in a spiritual sense I am free to say that my food disagrees with me, but it would ill become me to speak as to the quality of your baking : I eat in silence, sister, and know my place."

"Eat in comfort," said mother, "and the more the better ; while we're here we're meant to enjoy our victuals and relish our bread, and thank the good God if any extra butter finds its way to our slice !"

Guztav and I were very merry over the new hen-girl at the Convent—"Annerl the younger" we called her ; and a week after I was well content that mother wanted me to carry something to St. Martinsberg, and with a basket on my arm I set off up the hill : the morning was fresh and beautiful and I went along gaily, sometimes stopping to gather the wild-flowers that grew at my feet or to eat the ripe berries that clustered in the bushes. It was a clear, still day, so clear that I could see far away in the glades of the forest the happy wood creatures at play, the white rabbits at their hide-and-seek behind the drifts of dead leaves the last night's wind had blown about the roots of the trees, bigger and older ones shaking their long ears gravely and munching any green shoots they could reach ; the brown squirrels darting up the old pine-stems, or running races among the beech-trees, and sitting up with their great soft tails curled over their backs while they ate nuts and gossiped ; the birds that circled in lower flights and perched upon the branches looked at me curiously with their bright friendly eyes : above there was the blue sky through a pattern of tangled brown and golden leaves, and in the distance

purple haze with long rays of light shining through it, and another embroidery of shadows, soft grey tracery over the moss and the short grass and the coloured stones upon my path. What beautiful colours there are in everything when the heart is light and the eyes are clear enough to see them ! The edges of the leaves were scarlet, as though the fingers of the Autumn had just pressed them as it passed, and the beech and oak leaves were brown and curled and twisted as if they had tried to turn aside from its greeting ; and I could see little points of blue and crimson and violet in the rocks under the plumes of fern, where sprays of greenery swayed gently in the air, and dark shining ivy twisted itself amongst the yellow grass.

I could write a great deal about our beautiful great Convent, which is almost as big and strong as a fortified town, and looks so grand, crowning the hill with its towers and terraces and wide courtyards ; but what would be the good, for everybody knows how grand it is, and how strong. I stood still for a moment when the walk was ended, to enjoy the fresh strong air, and get my breath again, and far, far below me lay the wide plain, and the forest, and the great river. Of course I could see it all ; but the only thing my *mind* saw was a little clump of pines in the Bakonyerwald, which grew close to the farm, and I said : "Guztav is working there, and thinking of me. What a wonderful thing love is ! I am so little, and the world is so wide, and yet my heart feels so large, as if its gladness could fill all this great wide plain, and make it happy."

I had spoken the words aloud, and a quiet voice answered close to me, "Yes, little one ; and so God's love fills the world that He has made, and therefore there is no one, however poor or lonely, who may not rejoice in His mercy."

I turned half-frightened, but it was only my kind Father Athanasius, the good Father who taught me when I was a child, and has always heard my confession. I had not told him about Guztav, but it would not surely be difficult to do that ; it is so easy to confess what only makes you happy ; even if I should have to say that I had thought about him all through the mass, and that I had felt vain of myself, and pleased when old Zéna said I had the prettiest eyes in the forest and she knew who had found it out. Then, too, I could say that I had never once forgotten my prayers, because now there were always so many things about Guztav I wanted to pray about, and I liked to thank our gracious Lady every hour. I think being happy *makes* one pious, so that it must be a good thing ; and, perhaps, that is why the saints can never sin in Heaven, because they are too glad and blessed. I thought all this, but I did not say a word.

"So you have brought us something from the good mother," he said, touching my basket. "Go and talk to the women in the fowl-yard presently : and how is the farmer ? Ah, there, indeed, is a good man ! And Guztav—what of him ?" And the kind eyes smiled at me full of questions.

"We are all well, most dear Reverence," I answered ; " and the dun cow has a calf, and there are six pigs fattening, and mother says they'll make prime bacon, and I sold all the cheeses;"—and then something made the colour come into my face, and I looked down, and thought it must be time to go to the hen-wife.

"And so you sold the cheeses, little Elspet," the good Father broke in. "Why, you will soon make a good housewife, and want to manage a house for yourself. Is it to be Hans, or Stefan, or one of the wood-rangers?"

"Oh, Father," I cried ; "you *know*. Guztav and I have always made our pilgrimage together ; and, when we were little children, and gave our offering at the shrine by the three roads, the same candle did for both ; our dear Lady knew we were poor, and that it was one heart that gave it ! Dear good Father, I will make you my little confession here ;—see, as I kiss your hands : it is one heart still, Father, for Guztav and me."

"The good God bless you," he answered kindly ; "for surely the birds who build their nests may praise Him as truly as they who serve at His altar : our psalms, it may be, are all the sweeter for their singing." He spoke in a low, quiet voice, and there was a dreamy look in his soft kind eyes, as he too gazed down upon the great world at our feet, and then : "All the earth doth worship Thee, the Father Everlasting—the All-father, who lovest what Thou hast created, and wildest the happiness of all men."

I think he had forgotten I was there, for he took out his breviary and read softly to himself ; and I stole away to the little arched door which opens when one puts one's fingers through a hole by the latch ; and so I had no need to ring, and came quietly, in a moment, into the fowl-yard, and there was the same picture Annerl had told us of.

A background of old brown stone buildings, deep-arched windows, behind which were stores of grain and sweet-smelling hay ; bits of cord stretched loosely from one mullion to another, on which flax was hung ; strings of onions under the broad, low-hanging eaves of the fowl-house ; a great dovecote, with deep red tiles on its pointed roof, that ran up into a point crowned with a wooden shelter for the big bell, and with a long frayed rope hanging by its side, which came out from a little hole in the wall ; a soft flutter of pigeons with white wings beating and feathering against the deep blue of the sky ; a doorway, with pails and an idle broom, and a smell of hot meal porridge coming from within ; a great cackle and scratching and clucking amongst the chickens, and defiant crowings of conceited-looking cocks ; and in the midst of all the noisy bird-life, a still figure sitting on the doorstep, singing, with the sunlight full upon her face. It was Annerl's picture, but painted in such different colours as I saw it then.

I don't know how to put into words what she looked like. I thought she was the most beautiful creature I had ever seen—dark, passionate,

loving eyes, with a yearning sorrow in them that melted my heart ; a face that was like nothing but a dark clear pool on which the sun and the clouds bring changes ; so, in a moment even, I could see her heart send changing lights and shadows across the pathos of her eyes ; a sweet tender mouth, masses of black hair wreathed round her head and fastened with a big silver pin, quiet, lithe hands that lay listlessly on her lap, or clasped each other with strength. Not like me, I thought—I, who am so quick, and changeable, and careless !—Oh, not at all like me ; so much steadier of purpose, so far stronger, so very beautiful ! Why it was I cannot tell, but even in that first moment I could not help comparing our two selves with a strange pity in my heart, for some one, only not for her !

She sat looking at the blue sky and the whirling flight of the pigeons, and singing in a sad, soft voice—

Blow, thou soft west wind, where he I love is sleeping,—
Sing truly, sweet swallows from the far western sea ;
For all lone and dreary his sad love is weeping,
And the east wind, the strong wind, shall bring word to me.

Thou east wind, that one word, one love word art keeping,—
Cry through the forest like a storm bird on the wing ;
For all lone and dreary his sad love is weeping,
Hung'ring for the message thy strong true song shall bring.

Then suddenly she stopped, and seeing me, rose and came towards me with a smile of welcome. I was going to tell her my errand, and to ask for the old hen-wife, who would want to hear of my mother, and how the younger broods were faring, for we had a new breed at the farm, and were proud of our pullets, when something in the face before me carried my memory back with a sudden leap, and I cried, “ Why, you are the Zigeuner maiden who sang in the café ! who would have thought of finding you here ? ”

I spoke without thinking what effect my words might have, never dreaming how they might move her. Her beautiful face turned white, even to the lips, and the eyes filled with tears ; she came forward a yard or two with an entreating look in her fawn-like eyes, with her hands half extended timidly ; then suddenly her mood changed, she laughed, a gay ringing little laugh, her face cleared and grew firm in a moment, and taking my basket, she said : “ You have brought something for Tante Anna ; I will call her, and you must come in and rest. It is not strange that my face reminds you of an absent one, others have told me the same. I do not believe in ghosts or in double spirits, else you might persuade me that mine had been wandering. The little hen-girl of the St. Martinsberg singing at a café ! Holy Saints, there would be a scandal ! You should not say such a tale even in joke, the pigeons might hear us and tell it again. Come and rest yourself, and eat some porridge.”

She was so gay, so careless, so loving, she perplexed me by her change

of moods, and by her strange resemblance to the gipsy at Pressberg, about whom Caterina and I had talked so much. But before we had been together half-an-hour I had forgotten it all, and had grown so fond of the hen-girl that I made her promise to pay us a visit in the valley, and to tell my mother some of her stories of her own parents, and the wild castle of Prince Z——'s, and about the old jäger who had taught her to sing. Her home was in Transylvania, she said, amongst good, quiet people, but she had been living with an aunt who was a laundress at Waitzen, and she had spoken of her to a cousin of Tante Anna's, who, now that she was getting old, needed help with the poultry, there were so many of them, and picking the birds was work enough for a pair of hands, to say nothing of the feeding and cleaning. Marie, that was her name, was so bright and merry, and told so many amusing stories, and was so earnest I should stay, that I lingered long at the Convent, and the sun was setting when I set off on my homeward way. Marie went with me for the first mile or two, and when we parted we embraced, and promised to meet often; and I thought, "Next time I will tell her about Guztav; perhaps she is also betrothed, and then we can talk of our lovers together. He must be a Transylvanian, and he cannot certainly be half as nice as Guztav. There is no place like the Bakonyerwald and the good dear folks who live there."

Ah, how beautiful the forest was that evening when the sun had quite gone away and the red light faded from the topmost branches! the trees looked so grand and solemn in the dim twilight, everything was still, a little frost was come already, and the dew that had fallen was crisp, and the leaves had curled themselves up more closely than ever; the birds were gone to bed and were sleeping under all their feathers, well covered up by their tails and their wings, as we are under *duvets*. It made me laugh to think how the robins and the thrushes must try to wrap their tails round their legs when the frost pinched their little toes just where the wing-feathers wouldn't quite reach; the squirrels, I knew, were well off, rolled in a round ball like a muff, all warm fur everywhere, and then the rabbits!—well, their ears would help, and then there were always so many of them they would keep each other warm; and so I chattered to myself, my head full of pleasant little silly thoughts; and as the wood grew thicker and the darkness deepened, I was forced to slacken my pace somewhat and choose my way; and then I heard a step amongst the crackling leaves, and Guztav's voice, and in a moment he was beside me holding both my hands, and with his head very near mine; though it need not have been, for we were not at all the same height. Perhaps though, as the light was so dim, it was the only way he could see me.

"My little wood-bird," he said, in his strong tender voice, "the mother has been wondering what had become of thee, and so I came to see. Were you loth to come home again, Elspet?"

"Why do you ask such silly questions? Suppose I had been to an enchanted castle where there was a beautiful prince, and the prince had said, 'Elspet, I will make you a princess; ' do you think it likely I should

ever want to come home—do you, Guztav?" and I pinched his hand a very little.

There was a young moon that night, and as it rose higher in the heavens, its pale, sweet light shone between the leaves and made our faces bright again. Guztav kissed me on the forehead, where, he said, the moonbeams had made a glory, and called me his home saint, his dear, blessed little Elspet, his good angel, and many another sweet foolish name; and then he wanted me to tell him again how I loved him—as one asks the tiny children, who open their arms and say, "So much, and again so much, thousands of worlds." I remember so well how the light shone on the trunk of a large beech-tree, and threw our shadows on the grass, and how Guztav turned my face towards his with his caressing hand, and kissed me very many times, and said, "Confess, tell me truly, tell me what is in thy heart."

And I answered, "I have confessed already, and am happy and shriven. I have made my confession to the good Father, and have no need to open my heart to thee." And he said, "But only repeat thy confession that I may shrive thee too. Tell me, little Elspet, what didst thou confess to the *Geistliche*?"

"I love Guztav."

Ah! how that pleased him. I saw the gladness in his face, and so did a little bird peeping over the edge of its nest and looking at us with kind eyes; and so we walked through the wood and thought it was Eden, and forgot everything but our two selves.

Mother was cross with me for staying so late, and said that though I was betrothed and Guztav was like a husband, still it was an ill habit for girls to get into of strolling about by night: "Moonlight or not," said mother, "girls are best at home and wives at their spinning when the sun's down." But her forehead soon grew smooth again, and she asked after Tante Anna and her rheumatism, and listened to all I could tell them of my day at the Convent, and of the beautiful new hen-girl. Mother said it was a good work of Tante Anna's to look after a girl like that; she would be out of mischief up there, and she might not have been if she had stayed in the towns; and that reminded me of my first fancy, and I said to Guztav, "She was just like the beautiful Zigeuner I saw at Pressberg, so like that I thought she must be the same, and I told her so."

Guztav started and looked at me with a strange perplexity in his honest face.

"But she said she was from Transylvania, and laughed at me, and told me wonderful stories of her home and her parents, and the old *Schloss* where they live; she can talk like a book, and her tales make you smile and cry at once. I asked her to come to us here and talk to you: she would make even Annerl merry."

"You asked her to come here!" cried Gustav, and then stopped. I looked at him amazed; he seemed so odd and so strangely disturbed about nothing; but he said he must see to the horses, and went away

s, suddenly ; and I, being tired and sleepy, forgot all about my new friend and went to bed.

Another fortnight passed, and nothing happened that I need write about here. Guztav and I talked of the time when we should have a home of our own, and whether I should make good bread and porridge, and how he would play his violin while I worked ; and we spoke of the animals, all the good beasts whom we were so proud of, and of our love, and the Christmas feastings, and what fields were to be sown with grain for the summer ; but sometimes Guztav seemed half-dreaming, and answered me at random, or not at all. There was a change in him, and it vexed me to feel it was something so indefinable that I could not grasp it and ask him its cause. But I knew in my heart that across our clear sky had come a little cloud, no bigger than a man's hand—still it was there.

What a rain of tears was to fall—what a darkness to cover my world—what a shadow of loneliness and death ! And yet I hardly felt its approach, standing in the sunshine of my glad, blessed happiness.

IV.

When next I went to St. Martinsberg the trees were bare, and a light powdering of snow was on the ground, but I didn't mind that ; the cold air made my cheeks burn and sent a pleasant tingle of warmth through all my body as I hurried along the steep path. I had put on my silver ornaments and the broad belt with the onyxes which grandmother had brought with her from Transylvania, and the red ribbons in my hair that Guztav liked ; and I thought he would come to meet me again, and I would hide and make great snow-balls and pelt him from behind the trees. I must not stay to write about half my thoughts, or of the peace and quietness of the still winter-scene ; if I say so much about everything I shall never come to the end of my penance. Only what I saw when I reached the great Convent, will it be necessary for me to tell. I had opened the little arched door in the wall very quietly, and there I stood transfixed, leaning against the stones and looking at a new picture in the fowl-yard.

There were the pigeons as before, wheeling round their tower, with little cooing cries to their mates within the nest ; there were the defiant cocks, the bustling, scratching mother-hens, the big spring-chickens, the geese fattening themselves for Christmas, the brown door-way, the scrap of deep blue sky where the colour always seemed to deepen in the corner by the bell-loft ; but a tall young forester was standing with his back to me, wrapped in one of our great sheepskin coats. On her knees before him was Marie ;—all her black hair hung about her shoulders—the thick braids dishevelled and loosened—her eyes looked large and worn with weeping—her mouth palpitated with sobs. The face, with its dark pallor, its pure passionate beauty, brought vividly before me the old Pressberg memories, in spite of her Transylvanian dress—the shirt and

the grey silver ornaments, and the brilliant *obrescha* with its red fringes that spread over her white dress and swayed with the restless movements of her body. Her clasped hands held one of the man's with earnest entreaty, and she spoke rapidly in a language I could not understand.

"The Zigeuner!" I whispered, under my breath, certain now that my first impression had been the true one, as I stood quiet from very astonishment. Her companion answered her: "Dear Lueska, do not be so unhappy. I shall always care for thee; always watch over thee."

Then she spoke again, at first in her own tongue; but as though she feared he had not understood her, she added in Hongarisch, "But without love I shall die—I shall die!"

"Thou shalt have that also; only be patient," he replied, in a deep soft voice. And then she threw herself on his shoulder and kissed his hands passionately, with wild words which I could not understand—I, who had understood too much already; for the soft voice was one I knew well, the caressing hands had clasped mine—how often! The tall forester was my lover; and in the broad felt hat he wore still hung the little purple ribbon I had placed there for good fortune, and the scarlet ribbon for joy.

A great sickness and faintness came over me, but I still kept before my mind the one thought to get away—to hide in the forest, to hasten to shelter like a wounded fawn who goes into the woods to hide her hurt: all sense beyond the one pressing need of putting distance between them and me had left me. How I walked or ran along the path I cannot tell; but at length, weary and footsore, I sank upon a little bank of dead leaves in the depths of the forest and faced my sorrow.

Guztav was like others of whom Anerl had told me, with tender words and a false heart; that gipsy-girl must have bewitched him in the far-away time when he had been with her people, and now she had come here, under her shallow disguise, to be near him. A hundred little things came flocking into my mind, half-words of Guztav's, half thoughts of mine; put together now they seemed to mean so much. Great God! how I had loved him; he had been the whole world to me, and all the time, all the time, he had had that other face in his heart, was dreaming of it, cherishing it, even when I had believed I was reading his very soul.

In a moment my world had crumbled into ruins: my beautiful fairy-world of pleasant thoughts, of air-spun fancies, of sweet day-dreams, and, worse, my real world, the home-life, the love, the entire trust, the blessed content, the wife's faithfulness which I would have given; and, heaven! —ah! that was what made me the most wretched—it was all gone, too! I believed in God's love no longer, or in the blessed saints' goodness: even the Divine pity of our Lady of Mercy had been turned from me. God could not help me, I knew, for I could never trust my Love again—my love, my love! And then I wept great tears of agony, sobbing for the pitifulness of it, that I could never, never believe in him again. "O death, come for me!" I cried. "Dear death, take me away into some quiet

place where I may sleep and never dream!" I wept there on the ground, with my face buried in the dry brown leaves, for a time that might have been hours. I could not tell: I thought over all the past—the deceit, the treachery. I never asked, Can it be true? I knew it must be; and slowly I grew hard, and then the wild pain at my heart deadened. I rose from the ground and smoothed my hair, and passed my hand over my face; it seemed to have grown fixed and old. I felt as though the time when I had been happy had been very long ago. Quietly I walked home through the wood, passing the great beech-tree where the moonlight had once thrown our two shadows on the grass at its foot. My breath came a little quicker, with a quiver of pain about the heart, but I felt harder and stronger, even for such a memory as that. I made some excuse to mother to account for my not having visited the people at the Convent, and then washed my face and braided some fresh ribbons in my hair and went about my usual work. Mother looked at me a little wistfully, I thought, and father started when I spoke to him. I could not help it, but I knew my voice had changed; it was thin and dry, and the colour had gone out of it. Annerl came in, and Guztav, who spoke to me as usual. I was quite calm, my pulse did not beat the faster for hearing his step; my face I knew was quiet and pale, my heart was dead, and I was beyond being sorry any more.

Another week passed; often Guztav would try to speak to me in the dear old fashion with little tender words, but I answered him coldly, strangely, with hard eyes that I knew never faltered, which would never, never, melt for him.

"Annerl," I said one day, "do you ever think how long you may have to live? Don't you wish the time would go faster?"

It gave me a dismal pleasure to feel that I could talk to some one to whom life had always been dreary and forlorn.

"Don't you hope you will die soon?"

Annerl gazed at me with a look almost of terror in her lack-lustre eyes, with open mouth, and hands that shook as she stretched them towards me.

"For mercy's sake, Elspet, don't talk to me of dying! I'm not so old as you think; there's a deal of life in me; please St. Antony, I may live to a great age: we always were a long-lived family, and I've heard mother say her grandmother was bedridden for twenty-two years, with no more sense than that milking-stool, and lived to be a hundred!"

"But you say life is so doleful, Annerl; aren't you tired of it?"

"Tired of life! Why, Elspet, you must be talking in your sleep; whoever heard of any one being tired of life? It can't be any pleasure to be laid out stiff and cold, while the neighbours gossip over you and drink their wine, and tell lies about you that you can't contradict."

"But heaven!" I said, "surely, for those who love it, there must be rest after all the weariness here."

"Heaven's all very well," answered Annerl, "for meek pious souls,

who go smiling through their work whatever happens, and can sit through a sermon an hour long, and feel it does them good in their stomachs ; but I'm that restless, I couldn't stop on a gold seat if I was set there. One must have something to work one's thoughts upon. I've been so long used, you see, child, to things being contrary, that I think it would put me out dreadful to have everything go just right ; and then there are the pigs, and I'm so *accustomed* to being dismal, that it's worked round, so that I feel a kind of pleasure in it, or at least a satisfaction. No ! St. Bridget be praised, I'd like to outlive all my faculties down here, and when I've no wits left, and am too blind to see the maize grain or the pigs' troughs, and too weak to grumble, the Holy Mother will manage the rest ; and by that time I shall be too old to care where she puts me ! ”

I turned away sad at heart. I, too, might live to be a hundred ; just a hard shell with a withered heart like a dry kernel, and no one would care for me, and no one have pity ; for the saints would quite forget a poor little girl who prayed to them no longer.

One day I was ironing on the long wooden table under the window, smoothing carefully the pretty muslin aprons mother and I wore over our dark blue gowns on Sundays, when I heard voices, and peeping round the swinging shutter, saw old Tante Anna sitting by mother on the bench by the door, and both in earnest talk : she was a queer little old woman, who looked as if she might once have been tall, but was now all head and legs, like a water-raven ; she wore high black boots, strong and thick enough to resist all the wood morasses, her short dark petticoat just reached below the knee, and she wore an over-skirt divided at either side, a sort of long blue apron bound with scarlet which hung down before and behind, and over all the heavy sheepskin coat with its thick fur turned inwards, and a black fur collar round her wizened old throat, which was tightly muffled in the large white wrapper that was folded round her head.

“ I don't like the looks of it, neighbour,” Anna was saying. “ My cousin from Waitzen vouched for her, and it was on my word that she was engaged at the Convent ; but if I told you the half”—and here the old head nodded emphatically, and I lost some words—“ I have my ears open, neighbour, and my eyes, and that girl's a *heathen* ! ”

Mother crossed herself, and said, “ It's best to be charitable in speaking of others ; young girls are foolish things, and you may have misjudged her ; ” for mother had heard she came from Transylvania, and that made her heart yearn over her I knew.

“ Charitable,” grumbled Tante Anna angrily, “ when one's own character's at stake, too ! Why, only yesterday she refused to go to confession, and I hear her muttering strange words to herself : if she's praying to the saints, they belong to another calendar. She was as bright and clever and willing as need be when she first came, but she's under an evil spell now, it's my belief. One moment she's merry, and the next weeping, and then she rambles on with her strange words when she thinks

no one hears her. The girl's bewitched ; and where should I be if some day the Devil carries her off on a broomstick, with all the best eggs in a basket ? Ah ! it's easy to laugh, but that's what it'll come to."

And then another voice joined in : " You may talk of spells and witches with reason ; they're in the air somewhere, and they've laid hold of our Elspet : she's pining and wasting like the girl at Raab, whose wicked cousin kept a wax doll in a cupboard that was her very image, and stuck pins into it till the poor thing would have died if the magic work hadn't been found out, and put a stop to. Why, Elspet, who used to be the merriest girl in the Bakonyerwald, is so changed you'd hardly know her. She asked me last week if I didn't wish to die ! Somebody has been sticking pins into something that has to do with *her*."

" Silence," cried mother ; " who dares talk of witches and evil eyes in the same breath as my child's name ! An idle tongue makes a sore heart, and that's the worst style of pin-sticking ever I came across."

" Don't be angered with me, sister-in-law ; I'd bite my tongue out before it should say an ill word of Elspet. Don't I mind when she was a little baby, a small toddling girl that used to coax me to let her feed the pigs and have the smallest to play with. It's a weary, weary world ; but it wasn't altogether worn-out and good for nothing while our Elspet was in it with her bright eyes and her merry laugh. But since the spell fell on her, what little sunshine was left us is all clean gone."

" And thy wits after it," said mother. " Girls are changeable, and have their odd fancies and likings, as other young things. It's time Elspet grew sober ; there's her marriage to be thought of, and when she's a house and a husband to care for, she'll have little time for idle fancies."

" Husband, indeed ! " grunted Tante Anna ; " as to that, marriage don't always mend matters, and some husbands are worse than none."

" We have a son to thank God for," said mother ; and they spoke of other things.

It seems to me, in looking back, as if I was often now hearing the others talk, catching stray words and looks and piecing them together in my mind, as though I were busy over some strange embroidered story quite apart from myself and studied the pattern curiously from my distant standing-ground. It was partly that a habit of silence seemed growing on me and that I went about my work mechanically, so that my idle mind was listening to others, and overhearing much almost insensibly to myself.

One day it was mother's voice talking to Guztav at the wood-pile.

" She has such a strange fixed look, it troubles me, my son ; has anything come between you ? It wearies me to watch her, and my heart aches when I see her sad eyes."

" She never looks at me," Guztav would answer ; " she hardly speaks. I, too, see how pale and thin she is, and how she is changed. Can the heart change too, can love die out of one's life ? I will go away if it is the

thought of me that troubles her. She shall be free again ; I will never urge my love upon her."

Yes, very willingly he would go, I knew that well ; most readily would he give me my freedom !

"No, no, Guztav," mother answered, mastering her voice with an effort, "the child is ill ; pay no heed to her fancies ; she is restless, as young girls will be before they bind the yoke on their shoulders. I wouldn't trouble her with many words ; keep out of her way a bit : you give your wild ponies a long rein till they've worked off their shyness."

Another evening it was father who spoke. "Mother, what's come to Elspet ? the girl's wasting away."

Mother did not answer : she was sobbing. I remember that I felt a vague wonder that she should be so moved : she who was always so brave and cheery. I was near enough to hear all they said. In the old days I should have been ashamed to listen, now I never knew that I was doing so ; the words came to me like the other strange sad things of my life, in which all things had lost their relative place and proportion.

Mother cried for a long time, it seemed to me, and then father said very gently, "Don't fret so, dear heart ; let us tell our Lord the trouble, and He will help us." I heard them kiss the old wooden crucifix that hangs by the chimney, and then the murmur of a prayer, and then father's voice again. "Some trouble has fallen on the child : there's a fever upon her ; but whether it's one the saints have sent, or man's wickedness has brought upon her, heaven only knows ! If I thought it was Guztav——" and an angry word burst from father's lips.

"Guztav !" cried mother ; "he worships the ground she treads on, and is nigh distraught about her ; she'll hardly speak to him, and he's breaking his heart over her coldness : the poor boy hasn't had an appetite for a week past."

I moved away then and heard no more ; but the next morning father said to me very tenderly, "Little one, wilt thou not tell thy trouble to thy old father ? Thou art troubled, my child ; is it that thou hast ceased to love Guztav ?" I answered him with a laugh and a hard jest, and would have pity and help from no one.

Tante Anna came again like an evil old bird, croaking out her tale. "Witchcraft, neighbour ; you'll believe me at last : she's begun to lay her spells now on another." And then she muttered in mother's ear.

"I'll never believe it, never. He's good and true : do you think I don't know an honest man when I see him ? Never dare to say such words again. I wish you a good even, and the longer the road grows between here and the Convent, the better I shall be pleased."

"I shouldn't have spoken, neighbour, if I hadn't had your good at heart : it's my belief she's a worthless hussy ; and as for that piece of perfection of yours, you're welcome to make the best you can of him. Bad's the best, neighbour, bad's the best !"

Still repeating her doleful refrain, old Tante Anna shuffled away from

the door. I knew it was all true, and that Guztav was often at the Convent now; I learnt it from many a little thing too slight to speak of here.

There came a day when Guztav spoke to me of the change that had come. I had gone to the well to draw water, and he met me there suddenly, and taking the pails filled them for me silently. Guztav was never one for many words, but he took my hand and said sadly, "Elspet, what is it, will you not tell your trouble to me?"

I felt my face turn white, but I did not tremble: nothing could move me now; only I drew away my hand and stood quietly looking at him. I remember the earnest pleading of his face, the sorrow in his eyes, as one sees grief or love in a picture or an image, a thing apart.

"Elspet, what has come between our love?"

"You ask me that!" I cried; and suddenly with a fierce bound my heart seemed to break out of its prison,—"you dare to ask me that! Listen! I despise you, I hate you, I have forgotten you: let me go!"

Horror-struck, he stood as though I had stabbed him, but did not attempt to detain me, and I walked with swift steady steps to the house carrying my pails. I did not see Guztav again for a week. Father said he had gone away about horses, but he sighed as he spoke. Mother's eyes were often red now, though I never saw her cry. Annerl seemed changed; she helped mother quietly in a hundred different ways, talking less about herself, and praising her pigs as though she wished to be pleasant and make cheerful conversation.

I could not sleep much, or eat enough to satisfy mother; hopeless, aimless, lonely, my sorrow seemed greater than I could bear. We had wild weather about this time: the wind would howl through the forest as though the wild huntsman and his dogs were abroad; it came in great gusts against the house, and shook the strong rafters, and dashed itself against the walls till all the pitchers were jangling, and we were shaken in our beds. It came with a roar like an angry spirit gathering strength in its fury, and howled and shrieked and battled with itself, and then died away in long, sobbing cries, in pitiful moans like a creature in pain. To my highly strung overwrought mind the voices of the wind brought agony: I would bury my face under the clothes and stop my ears, but I could not shut it out; it seemed as though my own misery had taken form and was mocking at me in my terror. One night I had been sleeping and woke suddenly, startled by a slight noise like the closing of a door or a movement at a window. I rose, and opening the shutters quietly so as not to rouse Annerl, looked out into the night. There was no moon, but the sky was clear, and I could see two figures standing near the stables,—two blots of darkness in the gloom, as though the brooding shadows of the night had intensified themselves in those vague shapes, which to me were so full of misery; for one was Guztav: I knew him in a moment by his great height, and the slouch of the shoulders. The other was a woman: she was talking eagerly, and holding his hand and looking up into his

face. I could not see hers; only the outline of the slight form, the small head, the glitter of the coins that rested on her hair, and, as the wind blew against them, the flutter of the long fringes from her waist. It was the Zigeuner maiden. I was not surprised or angered at the sight, only, sighing heavily, closed the shutters and lay down again: but I could not sleep any more.

V.

Father said the next day that Guztav would be home by another evening at latest. We breakfasted early, for it was a feast-day and a great holiday, and Caterina was to come from Raab, where she had been staying with the wife of the apothecary, to visit us and join in the pilgrimage to St. Catherine's shrine: for it was the 25th of November, and the blessed St. Catherine was the patroness of our wood chapel, and of the church of the next village; and far away in the valley was a shrine and a holy well, whose waters were very good for rheumatism or fevers, or even for sore eyes and the tertian ague: indeed they helped in almost anything. Mother said, "What they were good for, depended on what you wanted cured; the blessed St. Catherine could not be expected to work a miracle for you till she knew what you really needed."

St. Catherine's day was a favourite holiday with every one. Soon after the sun had risen came a waggon from Raab with the apothecary's wife, who was a little pinched-looking woman with a thin red nose. She was accustomed to high life, and was very gaily dressed in a bonnet and shawl like a lady from Pesth; she had brought her two children,—a very troublesome boy of eight, and a little six-years-old daughter with a round, fair face,—and with her was Caterina. She was so glad to come, so pleased with everything, kissing everybody, asking a thousand questions, praising mother's coffee and the delicious cream and butter, delighting Annerl by her raptures over the *Palestine* pigs, coaxing father, caressing me, and bringing such a flood of happy nonsense, of health and good spirits into the house, that I felt as though I were waking from a long, miserable dream, and determined that for this one day I would be happy and try to think I was a child again.

Four horses were harnessed to our waggon, two abreast; and Hans, one of the farm-men, in his new suit of white frieze, gay with bits of bright ribbons and embroidery, and his hat decorated to match, mounted, reins in hand; then the apothecary's wife was carefully lifted in; she was to sit in an arm-chair that had been fixed in the centre, and all the rest of us were to be packed in the hay. Mother fenced herself in with a big basket; Annerl sat on one side of the chair with her knees drawn up to her chin; Caterina and I balanced ourselves on the edge of the waggon, with our feet in the hay, and the two children between us. Father was by Hans in front.

We went along quietly enough at first. The apothecary's wife and

Caterina were a little sleepy after the long drive in the dark morning from Raab, but Fritz, whose great delight was in mischief, tickled Annerl's legs with long straws and grasses, which made her shriek and draw up her feet so suddenly that she hit her chin. This feat he repeated several times with the same invariable result, to his intense delight, and his shouts of laughter were echoed by Caterina, while I vainly tried to look shocked at his conduct.

"Saints and angels!" cried poor Annerl, "this hay must have grown on an ants' nest, or St. Vitus is punishing me for my sins. There it is again! Why, my poor jaw will be black and blue before we reach Szenckendorf."

"Can't you move a little?" said mother. "It's the seeds in the grasses, perhaps it'll be better farther along."

"I'm wedged too tight," said poor Annerl, "with the Frau Apothecary's chair."

And here a sudden lurch of the waggon, as the wheel struck against a large stone, sent the Frau Apothecary, chair and all, upon Annerl's back. A vigorous pull from mother restored both to their places; the horses were going at a steady gallop, when crash!—a wheeler had shied, and the waggon bumped against a tree, tilting up suddenly, so that Annerl was now on top of the chair, and mother was under it; and so on we went with many a merry shake and jumble, bump, crash, creak!—Hans smacking his whip, father shouting to the horses, little Fritz joining lustily in the din, while Caterina and I tried to hold on, and were sometimes flung violently into the air, sometimes thrown into the bottom of the waggon, often almost to the ground, as Hans would suddenly stop to greet one and another company from the farms about the forest, and then dash forward in a neck-and-neck race with a neighbour's team.

At Szenckendorf there was a crowd of carts and horses and people, the carts standing under the trees, with the horses picketed about them; and on benches or on the grass in front of the little inn, were hundreds of peasants: the men in new white woollen dresses under their great sheep-skin coats, some with strong leather jackets and waistcoats and belts like their horses' harness and broad slouched hats; boys in round caps with gay-coloured ribbons, or pieces of silk stitched on to them; head-jägers or master foresters in dark purple coats of fine cloth braided and tasselled, all in the strong high Hungarian boots; old women, like flocks of Tante Annas, with grim faces, in big boots and sheepskin coverings. The men were smoking, and each had brought his gayest pipe, the great white clay-pipes with little paintings of the Danube and the Cathedral at Waitzen, or a serving-girl with a glass of wine; their wives were in gala dress, with white or purple or dark-green handkerchiefs on their heads, with a brave show of old silver ornaments, and wearing stiff muslin aprons over their dark dresses.

There was a perfect chorus of welcomes as we came up. "Good-day to you, neighbour: a fine Christmas, and good luck for the year!"

"We kiss your hands, neighbour," to mother, "and the Frau Apothecary's." "I wish you joy of your wedding: where's the bridegroom, farmer? What! no time to spare for the Holy Well!—that won't bring good fortune."

"Drink with me, neighbour, a full glass and a merry heart!"

"Long life and short trouble!" cried another. The glasses chinked, the red and white wine sparkled in the sunshine, with the kind faces, the honest welcome, the pleasant friendliness. We descended from the wagon and joined the groups of eager people. Mother was stiff and had to hold on to me at first, and I felt almost happy again with her arm round my waist and her loving face so close to me, as she said,—

"I greet you all heartily, neighbours. One's joints grow old ahead of us; we've no cause to *feel* so while we've got the little daughters round us yet;" and she pinched my cheek; and old Mother Georg Max nodded and smiled, for father was filling her glass.

"There's some children that it would be a pride to grow old alongside of; and everybody knows that Marget Reitck's Elspet is just her looking-glass, and two handsome faces are better than one any day. Here's your good health, and a salutation to the blessed St. Catherine;" and the old woman tossed off the wine.

Amongst the crowd of joyous people and the din of voices I had watched over little Roserl, and now that mother had found a seat on the bench, and Fritz had joined some boys at their play, I took the child in my arms, and gave her cakes. She was an odd little thing, I thought, pretty and fair, with great blue saucers of eyes that seemed too big for her face, and with sunny hair plaited in one long tail which hung down her back. Caterina was playing all sorts of monkey-tricks and talking wonderful nonsense to the old women, keeping the youths in a state of perplexity between delight at her fun and merriment and awe at her grand bonnet and air of fashion. Little jokes were flying about, the air seemed full of happiness and light-hearted raillery; suddenly there was a hush. "Silence, silence," cried several voices. "Here's his Reverence!" "We kiss the hand, holy Father!" "Finish the bottle quick, Hans!" "Gretchen, where are those candles?" "Good-morrow to your Reverence!" "Hush, hush, attention there!" "Now, children, on your knees and ask a blessing. Jacob Palugyay, give me the baby." "Peter, where's the cannon?" "Now, Martin, you begin, you're the leader!" "No, it's your place to-day!" And so on, in endless variety, till the quavering voice of the old priest bade the pilgrimage begin.

Mother had taken out of her basket a packet of candles, and she gave one to each of us; and Fritz brought a long flaming piece of wood, and was enchanted at being allowed to light them, amidst many cries of "Don't drop the sparks!" "Take care of the muslins. Blessed St. Anna, the baby's smoking!" "Thou wicked boy, thou hast burnt thy little sister's hair, smell it, how it frizzles!"

Quickly we all fell into order, two and two. I walked by Caterina, still

feeling the terrible past to be a dream; but as the first notes of the chaunt sounded I remembered the old days long ago when we were children, when Guztav and I had sung together, walking in that same procession, shouting with all the strength of our little throats, and very much inclined to titter, only we were afraid that if we laughed and shook our candles we might let the grease fall on our new clothes.

The brightness died away, and I felt the old pain at my heart, and the shadow stealing over my face; but I did not think any one else could know it, till a small hand slid into mine, and little Roserl's blue eyes looked up at me wistfully, as she said:—

“Mother wanted to keep me, but I am going to walk with you, because all the rest are happy, and you look as if you wanted some one to comfort you.”

The little child's words were so sweet, as dew must feel when the ground is parched and dry. I stooped down and kissed her, and burst into a passion of tears. I had not cried before since the day I had been to the Convent.

We walked slowly along the path, crunching the hard snow with our feet, shading the candles with our hands from any sudden breath of air which threatened to extinguish them, and chanting the psalms in what fashion we best could; but as one end of the procession was a good way ahead of the other in the matter of time and union, much could not be said for the harmony: though there was at least a great deal of noise. And when we halted, as we did very often, and the old cannon was lowered from the men's shoulders and fired once, twice, thrice! it was really very imposing; and who knows but it may have pleased the good saints?

At a sudden turn in the road we met a number of peasants from another village waiting to join us, who quickly fell into rank. There was one figure bending over a psalter that I should have known amongst a thousand; it came like a sudden discord across the prayers that filled the air. I turned my head away; but in a moment a hand touched mine, and Marie's voice said,—

“Elspet, will you not speak to me? I was so glad to think I might meet you: I have not seen you for so long, not since the day you promised to love me.”

I shook myself free as though from a serpent. “Do not touch me, do not speak to me; you are false, and I know all!”

But she would not leave me. As I spoke, I felt a sudden quivering in the fingers that touched my arm.

“For the sake of all you love,” she cried in a whisper, “do not betray me.”

“It is you who betray, Marie, you who deceive; you have stolen my love from me. Ah! it is *you* who betray!”

She made me look at her, at her flushed face, at her bright indignant eyes.

“Elspet, by the soul of my mother! you wrong me and yourself.

Only trust me, only have patience, only love Guztav always ; he is true and sure."

She had turned away to her own place amongst the long line of women. "Only trust!" I repeated ; and my eyes sought the broad silver ring of betrothal Guztav had given me, and the old Saxon words engraven on it, "*Treu und fest.*" I dared not think, but yet the words were there ; the voices seemed singing them, the air was full of their sweet promise. I saw them in the sky, in the frosty tracery of the leaves, on the snow at my feet ; and then we stopped at the little shrine, the priest gave us a discourse, and there were more prayers and chaunts and a benediction : but I heard little and heeded less. The old well was a pretty sight beneath the overhanging bank of snow-covered grass, where sharp-pointed rocks forced their way through, wet with the little rills that ran down their crevices and brightened their colours and the curious veinings of their stone, and where a fringe of brown ferns and long grasses and trailing ivy, sparkling and encrusted with diamonds, hung down towards the well. The spring of fresh, clear, delicious water bubbled up from the depths of the soft earth, which was rich with the damp masses of fallen leaves and green moss and pine-sheaths, and where in summer wood-flowers love to grow. Now there were only frost-flowers, beautiful stars, and fairy trumpets, and rings and spears that glittered in the light. The children shouted with glee, and played with the little wheels they had made of straws, and which turned round in the water, where, a few feet below its source, it fell over rough stones and pebbles large enough to make it foam and dance against such sudden obstacle.

The candles were all burnt out, but every one had brought a cup or a glass with them to drink at the well ; some a bottle to take the water home with them for an ailing child, or a sick cow. I knelt down when my turn came, and put my lips to the cool stream and drank a long draught. I felt somehow as though it would wash my heart, and cleanse and heal it ; the sky looked bluer, the sun shone brighter. I thought, as I rose again, of the old words *Treu und fest*, and dipped my ring into the water and kissed it when I thought no one was looking.

The short winter day was almost at an end when we started in the waggon for home, and the cold had become intense. Father sat on the side-rail now, but he made the rest of us nestle down into the hay, and covered us with sheepskins. Little Roserl fell asleep in my arms ; Caterina sang ; mother and the Frau Apothecary nodded towards each other and groaned in their dreams when we came to a very bad bit of road ; Fritz lay on his face and kicked the back of the cart to keep himself warm, and tapped with his fingers on the soles of Anerl's feet, and pretended to be mice, till she woke with a shriek and declared that six big rats had run away with the best of the cheeses. Father held my hand ; I rested my head against his knee, and we were both very quiet. Another waggon came behind us with ten or a dozen of the forest lads laughing and singing.

"I never saw them home on a festival as early as this," said mother. "Caterina's bright eyes will have to answer for it! It's a good thing anyhow; and those who stop feasting betimes will have to fast less on the morrow."

But it couldn't have been Caterina, for when we came to the four cross-roads we lost sight of them.

VI.

After such a day every one was glad to eat a hearty supper and go early to bed, only first Annerl and Fritz carefully hung the little water-wheel on a hook over the pigs' house. We used to make them when we were children on St. Catherine's day, and bring them home carefully; they would cure warts, and keep the weasels and other vermin away, folks thought. I don't think father believed in them much; but mother used to say it was best to err on the safe side, and it cost nothing to keep them.

Annerl and I had given up our room to the Frau Apothecary and her children, and we and Caterina wrapped ourselves in warm rugs and skins, and lay down round the fire: Caterina might have slept with the others, but she liked best to be with me. A strange excitement kept me wide-awake: if I closed my eyes, I only heard Marie speaking; life didn't seem over any more, there were great wonderful possibilities in it. I did not think of them as joyful ones, indeed, I could not *think* at all; I only knew that something had broken up the terrible numbing frost, that I was young, and warm, and living, and that I was glad to be so.

Everything in our home was very quiet; the fire smouldered in the stove, and there was a smell of burnt chips, and a little heap of grey ashes on its top, where the kettle had been hung to boil; the big table had been pushed aside, and Caterina and I had curled ourselves up close to the hearth. Annerl lay flat on her back on the long shelf that went round two sides of the room; you might have sat down upon her without finding out that she was anything more than a hard cushion, except by her snoring, which was very melancholy—the saddest, dismallest sound, as though she were telling her sorrows to the ghosts, and mightn't put them into words. Caterina's pretty head rested on her arm, and the light from the bars of the fire shone on her face, her little delicate pink ear, and the long brown lashes, and lit up her bright hair. Now and then the wood gave a faint crackle, and a few sparks would fall out upon the hearth; sometimes it would blaze up for a moment, throwing quivering rays into the dark corners of the room, till the rows of wooden toys on the higher shelves seemed to spring into sudden vitality, each having a strange character of its own: there were the six horses I had watched father carve in the long autumn evenings, and the big cocks and hens, and Noah, and a great many of his animals. Noah's wooden face had a new expression on it—a grim smile, as though he had begun to see dry land somewhere. I thought of him and the birds and beasts, and wove them into a strange story that was half in dreamland. I sat up

and rested my head upon my hands, and watched them with quiet sleepy eyes.

Suddenly the silence was broken by the sharp report of a gun. I sprang to my feet and roused Caterina. There was a cry, shouts, angry voices, wild screams, and oaths, and sudden shots. Father flung on some clothes, and ran to the door; but the sounds had come from the back of the house, and Caterina and I, rushing into my room, threw open the shutter, and strained our eyes into the darkness. We could see nothing, only there was a sound of hurrying feet, of a fierce hand-to-hand struggle, of blows, outcries, and then a low moaning and shouts for help.

"Let us go, Caterina, it is horrible to stand here; let us *do* something."

"Elspet!" said a voice out of the darkness; "Elspet, are you there?"

"Marie!" I was dumb with a new fear.

"Elspet, listen; I am going away with my lover, my brave gipsy, back to my own people. There was a villain of a Zigeuner who wished to be my husband, and who bought me of my father—my own father, who dared to sell his child! I had to fly and to hide myself, for Miskah was away, and your Guztav helped me. I had tended him when he was with our tribe and his arm had been broken, and he was grateful. You were kind to me once, but you would all have hunted the poor heathen girl if I had told you the truth. I have waited for Miskah till my heart was sore, but your Guztav told him of my shelter, and in return we were able to warn him of the coming danger. The Zigeuners are crafty and sure: if your horses had been stolen, Guztav would have been ruined. I have betrayed my people; but my heart was full of revenge and of gratitude, and it made me speak,—still, I am sad at heart, Elspet, because of that. Wish me good fortune; kiss me once again for the sake of the good I have tried to do you, for the sake of your own sure happiness."

What was the sound that made us tremble more than with cold? A murmur of voices, of slow crowding feet, a sense of men bearing a heavy burden, a low thud as of something laid upon the floor, a flash of lights, words, sobs, and awful silence—and there before the fire, with his white dead face turned towards me, lay my one love whom I had wronged!

Oh, Guztav, Guztav! Will time ever make me forget that night—the misery of it, the despair—the blood slowly dropping from his side, the pitiful stony silence of the eyes!

"Shot through the heart!"

I don't know who said it, for as I fell on my knees at his feet, a merciful forgetfulness came over me and I thought I had died with him.

VII.

But it was only the misery and the wicked pride and jealousy that were dead ; another life began for us both ; and oh, I am so thankful it began here and not only in Heaven ! During the many weeks while Guztav lay ill and weak after the ball had been taken from his side, and when the doctor could not say whether even then he might not die, how I prayed to the great God, to our Lady of Mercy ! I must have wearied her out, only she is as patient as pitiful. Long hours I spent at the Calvarienberg on my knees crying to the dear Christ, to the Blessed Mother, by the memory of all her sorrows, to think of mine ; praying, too, to be forgiven because I had been so wicked and mean, and distrustful,—such a horrid little Elspet. Oh dear ! I deserve a great deal worse penance than this, though it has not been very easy to write down all about my bad thoughts ; and I could not have done it all if Caterina had not helped me, not about the thoughts, but the spelling and the long words, for Caterina is very clever, and has learnt to talk English and good German when she was maid at the Count Stefan Karoly's. The good Father will say it is not a real penance if one is helped ; but then if I had written very badly it would have been like a penance for him if he ever reads my confession.

But, oh ! I am so happy, I cannot write any more about the time when we were miserable : so I only will tell about Christmas eve, for that was quite the end of it.

Guztav sat in a big chair with his head resting on a cushion ; Annerl had made one and stuffed it so determinedly with her best pig's hair that it was as hard as a board, and so I just put one of mother's feather pillows on top of it, without hurting her feelings by saying so. He was such a pale weak giant now, this poor Guztav of mine. I sat on a little stool beside him in the pleasant glow of the fire. Mother came in and out preparing things for the festival, and smiling at us with kind eyes.

"Oh, Guztav," I said ; "I'm so glad we are not in Heaven ! It isn't wrong to say so, is it ? The world seems so beautiful and so full of joy."

" 'A fool's Paradise' Tante Anna called it," said mother ; "but what does she know about it ?—a crabbed old hen-wife that never had chick nor child."

"The first man and woman the good God made," said Guztav slowly, "he put into Eden. They must have found it beautiful also, with the gentle beasts and the garden to see to. That was how the world began, and they called it Paradise because of their love for each other ;" and one of the big wasted hands was folded over mine.

"Dear heart," said mother, "the world went pretty much then as it does now, I'm thinking. Adam and Eve must have been good, simple

bodies, as the priest used to tell us when I was a girl and we young ones weren't content with our victuals,—‘ Think of your first parents,’ he would say, ‘ who lived on herbs and green stuff, and never tasted meat except on saints' days.’ But I'm thinking when good mother Eve had children of her own, with healthy appetites, she must have found it hard to get along without porridge ; ” and mother carried her big bowl to the back kitchen.

It was Christmas eve, and there was a strange quiet over everything. Annerl and Hans were away at Raab buying stores for the morrow, father was out with the horses, and mother, I knew, would not come in again just then. I put my face down on Guztav's hand just as I had done once before,—so long ago it seemed,—and said,

“ Do you still care about me and love me ? Are you sure you have quite forgiven me, Guztav ? I am so poor and mean and am not strong at all. I am afraid you will be disappointed in me.”

And he answered :

“ Dear God knows we are weak and feeble, and that is why He loves us so truly, because He forgives so much ; it is He only who has to forgive ; and He knows, too, that *together* we are stronger, better, happier, and so He has given us to each other : listen, Elspet ! ”

I raised my head : the sweet Christmas bells were ringing far away in the forest.

“ Mother was right when she said the world hasn't grown old or changed. We two, my little wife, my own dear little heart, will go through it bravely hand in hand, and God will talk to us, and we will try to serve Him. The bells will ring as sweetly to us when we are old and grey.”

Ah ! I am so sure of that now. The bells rang far away in the wood, and in my heart !

Rest.

I HAD a long illness at the end of last year—not dangerous, not very painful, but compelling me, as an indispensable aid to recovery, to keep steadfastly to my bed. Such a mischance had not befallen me for twenty-five years. I am habitually an early riser, spending little time a-bed, and it seemed strange to me at first, with a strangeness not unmixed with self-reproach, to hear the cry of the milkman from between the sheets; but this soon wore away, and there came over me a calm satisfaction with my lot—something more than mere patience. And now I look back to the time with a feeling almost of regret, as though I should not much deplore the necessity of spending it all over again. It is true that all the conditions were in my favour. I had physicians as wise as they were kind, the best and brightest of nurses, and the sympathy of a few loving friends. And I had what I had not known for many years, something nearly approaching to—REST.

I had a fanciful notion at the time—and I have not ceased yet from the indulgence of the thought—that “the good Fairy” which watches over me, seeing that I would not of my own motion cease from labour, had purposely prostrated me that I might rest mind and body from the ceaseless work of years, and rescue what little good might still be left in me for use in a later day. Not long ago, some papers were written, in a popular periodical, on “Enforced Pauses in Life.” I could not, at the time, make a pause in life to read them; but I was much struck by the title, and I often feel an extreme amount of thankfulness for the occurrence and recurrence of these enforced pauses. They may last for only five minutes, or they may last for an hour, a day, a week, a month. It is impossible to calculate the good that they do. In the midst of a hard bout of writing-work, just as I am, perhaps, getting into a state of congestion, I miss a certain paper, or I cannot find a certain book. I am compelled to rise from my chair, to change my position, to go into another room, to spend a quarter of an hour, perhaps, in an active search, which may, after all, be unsuccessful. But the labour has not been labour lost; I am all the better for it; there has been some rest of the brain. Then, again, there is a stoppage on my line of railway: I am detained for an hour on my way to business. I spend the time between looking out of window and reading the advertisements in my newspaper; I take in a succession of entirely new ideas, not one of which may be of much value: but I have rested for a while, perhaps I have slept a little in the course of my detention. I have been ordered to halt and to stand at ease; I have been compelled to rest, whether I would or not; and however much I have

chafed at the commencement, I have always acknowledged, at last, that the hour has been well spent. For rest is a thing to be *done*, as well as work ; and if we are disinclined to do it, we should be thankful that the " Providence which shapes our ends " sometimes compels us thereto, in spite of ourselves. But for these occasional compulsions, I might, long ere this, have been in a churchyard or a mad-house. At least, I am convinced—and the conviction brings a strong feeling of gratitude in its train—that if I had always had my own way, I should not now be writing this essay, enjoying the soft summer air, and the sweet odour of the roses in my garden. What we are wont to call mischances are commonly blessings in disguise. And so I thought that as these small pauses had not been enough for me, it had been beneficently ordained that I should be laid in my bed for six weeks and ordered to take my rest.

So I took it, not merely uncomplainingly, but in the main gratefully. And I have been thinking that perhaps nothing but a decided attack of illness, placing me under the strict discipline of the faculty, would have had the same beneficial effect. We are wont to coquette with slight ailments. Admonitions of the gentler kind are too often unheeded. Nature benignantly indicates the time to pause ; but man, stiff-necked and presumptuous, too often disregards these warnings, and instead of ceasing to work, works badly, against the grain. Then, again, as to voluntary cessation from labour, there are conditions to be observed with respect to the perfect realization of the idea of a holiday, which some men, by reason partly of their natural dispositions, partly of their adventurous surroundings, can rarely fulfil. The nominal holiday often brings with it anything but genuine rest. Too frequently a man's business pursues him into the country, haunts him at the sea-side, crosses the Channel with him, sits upon his back wheresoever he goes. " This is his own fault," it may be said. Nay, rather it is his misfortune. It is the result commonly of a conscientious feeling, that what a man can do he ought to do with all the power that is in him ; and that he has no right, for the sake of personal ease and enjoyment, to lose sight of his appointed work, unless he be perfectly assured in his own mind that it can be done equally well by others in his absence. I have heard much of the " happy faculty " of getting thoroughly rid of the burden of work,—" shaking it off " is the favourite expression ; I do not doubt that it is a very happy faculty to the possessor, but the happiness may be confined to himself. I do not wish to be misunderstood, and, therefore, I must discriminate a little in this place. There are times and seasons when it would be a mere waste of self not to get rid of all cares of business, all thoughts of one's work. If one can do nothing, it is needless self-torture to kick against the pricks of the inevitable. There can be no self-reproach where there is no power to do otherwise.

What I mean is best shown by a familiar illustration. Whatever may be the business to be done, whatever the difficulties to be surmounted, whatever the cares and anxieties attending them, when business hours are

over on Saturday evening, when the last post has come in and gone out, a man feels that he can do nothing more till Monday morning. It is out of his own hands. God's law and man's law alike decree his quiescence. To endeavour to cast out, during that blessed interval, all corroding thoughts, is surely the duty of all of us, as it is a privilege to be suffered to accomplish it. And I am disposed to think that there are few to whom this privilege is not mercifully vouchsafed. I have heard men, upon whom the burden of the world has sat by no means lightly, declare that they always sleep better on Saturday night and wake later on Sunday morning than at any other time of the week; and that although Monday morning amply revenges itself, the sabbatical repose of the *dies non* strengthens them for the struggles of the coming week and keeps them from breaking down. I shall speak of this more fully in another place. I desire here only to illustrate the difference between enforced and wilful quiescence. Thus to "shake off business," when no business can be done, is a privilege if it come naturally to us, and wisdom if it be attained by discipline of the mind. I can see no use in opening letters of business on Saturday night, that cannot be answered and acted upon until Monday morning. To do so may give one a troubled Sunday, without helping the matter in hand. But when the banks and the marts and the exchanges are open; when men are buying and selling, borrowing and lending; when the public offices are in full departmental activity; when statesmen are meeting and legislators are babbling, and judges are sitting on the judgment-seat, it may be neither a privilege to be able to shake off business, nor wisdom to encourage the faculty. To lose a single post, to be half-an-hour late at a certain place, may make all the difference between success and failure. That which brings ease of mind is the knowledge that we have done our best—that it is not in our power to do anything more than we have done, or differently from what we have done. But there is the bitterness of self-reproach in the thought, that if we had not yielded to some infirmity or some temptation, some self-indulgence of the moment, causing us to lose a train or to miss a post—or, on a larger scale of pleasure-seeking, to be at a distance from the seat of business, when we might be close at hand—everything might have turned out differently, to our contentment instead of to our despair.

We cannot, unfortunately, get over the fact that all the tendencies of the age are the very reverse of favourable to Rest. I should be a mere Goth, an outer barbarian of the worst kind, if I did not thankfully acknowledge the benefits which the present generation derives from the almost magical rapidity with which both thought and matter are conveyed from one spot to another. Communication by post has been wonderfully improved, and the electric telegraph is a great institution. But posts and telegraphs are among the disturbing accessories of life; and a man, connected with business of any kind, official, professional, or commercial, can hardly expect to enjoy anything like genuine Rest, so long as he is within reach of the post or the telegraph. The telegraph now, under

post-office development, is invading the remotest districts. Happening some weeks ago to visit an obscure village or townlet in South Wales, I was surprised to see the posts and wires following the rural road, miles away from the station, and thus bringing London within a few minutes' distance of my retreat. In a little time, I suppose that there will be no place in which the telegraph cannot find you out. I have thought sometimes, in my search after rest, whether I would not, on leaving London, for an autumnal holiday, leave directions behind me to forward no letters or telegrams, or, as a certain preventive to the despatch of all unwelcome missives, to leave no address behind me. I envy, if I do not applaud, those who can do such things—who can thus cut themselves off from the outside world altogether, and feel no misgivings of danger. Of the faculty of abstraction I have spoken above. I am now writing of the permissive or preventive circumstances. And it unfortunately happens that the very men, to whom perfect repose is most essential, are those whom hostile circumstances rarely suffer to enjoy it. They may go to distant places in the holidays, but they cannot deny the approaches of the post and the telegraph; and if they did, their apprehensions and anxieties and self-reproaches would give them as little genuine rest as their letters and their messages and the office-boxes which are sent down to them. It is best, therefore, I am disposed to think, as most contributing to rest in such circumstances, cheerfully to face your business, to do such work, or to issue such orders for its doing, as will keep the wheels going without accidents; to get over it every day as expeditiously as possible; and then to give yourself up to recreation and amusement. Change of air and change of scene may do much for a man, and it is no small thing to be able to work by an open window, with the fresh air of the departing summer breathing upon you, and fair fields and smiling flowers to meet your eyes, when you lift them from your papers. Besides, there is a blessed immunity from the distracting, at times almost maddening, interruptions to which, at the head-quarters of your business, you are always subject—legitimate interruptions from clerks and clients, and illegitimate incursions and intrusions from the idle world, barbarians regardless of the value of time, coming on their own private business or on no business at all, impervious to hints of all kinds, from covert appeals to ill-disguised reproaches. There is gain in the direction of Rest from the absence of these disturbing influences, which is sufficient answer to those who thanklessly exclaim: "I might as well have remained at office." Better, again I say, under these happier conditions, to do one's work, than to be accessible to continually recurring apprehensions of disaster and the stingings of a lively conscience.

It is the absence, I am inclined to think, of these sharp twinges of self-reproach which, to a man encumbered with the affairs of the world, makes a period of sickness the nearest approach to a period of Rest to which he is ever likely to attain, until he has rid himself of all fleshly encumbrances. There is something very comforting in utter helplessness.

It is God's will that you should for a while be inactive—and there's an end of it. Satisfied that all that comes from the Almighty disposer of events is for the best, you resign yourself to his bidding, as a child; and with this childlike confidence come childlike tastes and inclinations, and something like a childlike state of intelligence: the mind, like the body, eschewing strong diet and delighting in the mildest nutriment. I am one of those who, in seasons of health and strength, live upon meat and wine. I eschew delicate cates and meek beverages. I have a horror of slops. I thrive best upon heroic aliment. But there are pauses in men's lives when the heroic is at a discount. Mind and body are alike in this. At such times I have found solace in the perusal of books of the milder sort, which in full health I should have regarded as the most insipid of all possible reading—books of the humdrum order, such as mild domestic stories about goody people, who neither do nor suffer anything that is not done or suffered by people of one's own acquaintance every day of the year. I would not class among these books such a work as Miss Martineau's *Deerbrook*, which is good reading at all times. I read it once, for the second or third time, during a severe attack of the gout, under a continual sense of gratitude to the writer. It is, indeed, a great book, with as much meaning in it as Bulwer's *Rienzi*, to which in my mind I have frequently compared it. Dr. Hope is a sort of *Rienzi* of middle-class life in England. Widely different as are the costumes, the scenic effects, all the external accessories, there is in both the same moral groundwork—the same truth wrought out by different means. The variableness of popular favour is finely illustrated by each writer. But I could read one when I could not read the other. Indeed, I tried, on my sick bed, last year, to read the *Last of the Barons*, and I found that the food was too strong for me. But I read with pleasure at the time some mild stories of everyday life at home, of which I do not now remember a word—stories that take a man placidly just a very little way out of the environs of self, and awaken a calm, genial, sympathetic interest, which is gently stimulating to the system, without disturbing one's rest. Even children's books are sometimes pleasant reading at such times—especially school-boy stories—such, for instance, as Charles Dickens' *Old Cheeseman*; for, in truth, a sick man is little more than a child. At such periods, indeed, there is much pleasure in going back some forty years to one's school-boy days, and wondering what has become of one's old school-fellows—what they have done in the world, what they are like. Some, of course, have turned up at odd times and in odd places, with friendly recognitions; and what delight has there been in the *renovata juventus*—what wonderful Rest in the interchange of old reminiscences—the revivification of boyish jokes between the Dean, the Queen's Counsel, and the Chief of an Official Department—fondly remembered by each other, with pleasant memories of fair young faces and light agile figures, and buoyant spirits that nothing could check! Such reunions are worth many a hard and toilsome passage in life, and the more so that they commonly come

upon us unawares. But I was minded to speak of these blessed reunions, in the spirit, not in the flesh—wishing to say that, when necessitated to cease from labour, and to find some pleasant occupation for the mind, I have often derived, from reminiscences of old times, especially of those embraced by the academic period, infinite solace and repose. At such times, in the life-pauses of illness, or in intervals of broken rest (which, as we grow older, become unfortunately more frequent) I have lived over again and again those blessed periods of

Youth,
When life was luxury, and friendship truth,

and have never become weary of the retrospect. Strange is it that these memories of our early days grow more vivid as we advance in life. Perhaps it is that, as the fiercer excitements of the heyday of manhood subside under the influence of age and infirmity, we live less in the present, and give ourselves more leisure to review the past. Our first affections, out of the family circle, are commonly given to some school-friend; and though, in after years, our paths may be far apart, and we may lose sight altogether of the first objects of our love, an enduring impression is made upon the heart, which Time cannot efface. Perhaps, on the whole, pleasant as are the meetings of which I have spoken, it is best for such school-friends (speaking of them as something distinct from mere school-fellows) not to meet as adults—not to have anything to mar the mind-picture of the bright-faced, supple-limbed boy, all aglow with healthful exercise and innocent excitement, shouldering his bat and walking down to the scorer to learn how many runs he has made. He may have gone the right way, or he may have gone the wrong way. He may have developed into a bishop, or he may have sunk into a sot. In either case, he is not our little Bright-face; and it is a pity that the reminiscence should be spoilt by any disfigurements of mature reality.

It may appear to some, and not unreasonably, that this notion of mine, that for a man, in the full swing of business, to realize anything like an approximation to rest, he must be prostrated on a bed of sickness, is not unlike the idea of Elia's Chinaman, that it was necessary to burn down a house to obtain the luxury of roast-pig. Perhaps it is. But there is nothing of which I am more assured, in my own mind, than that, in the midst of an active, perhaps an over-active, career (I speak of cerebral, not muscular, activities), to be laid aside by no will of your own, but by the ruling of One who better knows what is good for you, may be in your case, as it has been in thousands of other cases, the salvation both of your body and of your mind. If I were the ruling principle of a life-assurance society, I should put the question to the would-be assurer—“When did you have your last illness?” with a view to ascertain the danger rather of unbroken health (or the *simulacrum* of it) than the supposed warnings of occasional attacks of sickness. I should be always suspicious of men who are “never ill.” I have seen such men snap

suddenly, for want of that relief from incessant tension which, to some natures, can only come unbidden. The unbending of the bow is forced upon us when we are really sick ; and it is bountifully provided in such genuine disorderments, that, with the debility of the body engendered at such times, should come also a corresponding debility of mind, or rather a certain obtuseness thereof, an absence of that sensitiveness to external influences, which is inseparable from perfect, or even slightly impaired, health ; and from this absence of the *vivida ris* of other times comes the nearest approach to Rest which active men are capable of enjoying. And next to this, in their salutary effects on overworked man, are the conditions of the Sabbath.

I have spoken incidentally of the Christian's day of rest, and promised to return to the subject. I think with a shudder, sometimes, of what life would be without Sundays—if day after day the great wheel of the world went round with its ceaseless clatter, never a rest in motion, never a pause in sound. These are mere secular essays ; they do not aspire even to the dignity of lay-sermons. What am I that I should dare to write otherwise than as a worldling ? I speak of the Sabbath only in its original meaning, as a word that signifies *Rest*. And, in this sense, it is by most men, and ought to be by all, esteemed as the very greatest of all the blessings which the Almighty benevolence has bestowed upon Man. The worst Sabbath-breaker of all is the ingrate who is not thankful when the Sabbath comes round. He may go to Church three times a day, and be austere in all outward observances, but he breaks the Sabbath in his heart if he rejoices when it is over. There are many kinds of worship, and I am humbly disposed to think that the giving of thanks is not the least acceptable of them. If it be true that *laborare est orare*, we are praying during six days of the week, and may devote the seventh to praise. He who thoroughly enjoys his day of rest lives from morning to night in a state of thankfulness to the Almighty ; the incense of praise is continually rising from his heart. I do not envy the man who does not hail the advent of Sunday, and rejoice in the Rest which it vouchsafes.

I am not forgetful that among those who have professed this want of appreciation of the great weekly restorative, for which I am so devoutly thankful, once lived and loved one, of whom to write at all is to write tenderly and affectionately : that gentle hero, that Titanic weakling—Charles Lamb. It was not well of him to write in one of the most delightful of his *Essays* :—“ I had my Sundays to myself ; but Sundays, admirable as the institution of them is for purposes of worship, are for that very reason the worst adapted for days of unbending and recreation. In particular there is a gloom for me attendant upon city Sundays, a weight in the air. I miss the cheerful cries of London, the music and the ballad-singers, the buzz and stirring music of the streets. Those eternal bells depress me. The closed shops repel me. Prints, pictures, all the glittering and endless succession of knacks and gewgaws, and ostenta-

tiously-displayed wares of tradesmen, which make a week-day saunter through the less busy parts of the metropolis so delightful, are shut out. No bookstalls deliciously to idle over. No busy faces to recreate the idle man, who contemplates them ever passing by—the very face of business a charm by contrast to his temporary relaxation from it. Nothing to be seen but unhappy countenances, or half-happy at best—of emancipated 'prentices and little tradesfolk, with here and there a servant-maid who has got leave to go out, who, slaving all the week, with the habit has lost almost the capacity of enjoying a free hour, and livelily expressing the hollowness of a day's pleasuring. The very strollers in the fields on that day look anything but comfortable." Half-serious, half-sportive, and wholly wrong! It appears to me, too, that there is something of an anachronism in it. Written in the character of the "Superannuated Man," it relates to a past period of existence, when the writer had "a desk in Mincing Lane"—otherwise in Leadenhall Street—and yet it seems to be imbued with the spirit of superannuation, and to express rather the sentiments of the "idle man" than of the busy one. Perhaps he would not have written in this strain whilst he was harnessed to the go-cart of the Accounts' Office of the East India Company. It is surely abundant compensation for the closed bookstalls and the silent hurdigurdies, that you can rise in the morning with the delightful sense that there is nothing that you are compelled to do. If it be any luxury to you to lie late a-bed, you may do it. You need not look at your watch every ten minutes, lest you should miss the train (in Mr. Lamb's day it was the coach). You need not grudge yourself an extra quarter of an hour over your breakfast. You need not be disquieted by the thought that you have got your slippers on instead of your boots (in Mr. Lamb's time, the disquieting thought was connected with the buttoning of the gaiters). In a word, you need not be in a hurry. Is this no small thing in itself? Is it not rest—rest from that unceasing battle with Time that we are waging all through the week-days? For my own part, it is the quietude of Sunday that I so much enjoy—the cessation of the postman's rap, of the tradesman's call, of the street-cries, of the references to *Bradshaw*. I can sit still when I like, I can sleep when I like, and I have time to be thankful.

It is true that I commonly spend my Sundays a little way in the country, or rather, a little out of town, for in these days of perpetual ~~adification~~ the country is not easily reached. If you pitch your tent where there is a pleasant prospect of green fields and orchards, and you can see the cows grazing from your windows at all times and the apple-blossoms whitening the ground beneath them in the spring and early summer, the speculative builder soon plants opposite to you a steam-engine and a sawing-machine, exorcises houses, with demoniacal rapidity, from the bowels of the earth, and blocks out all of nature but the skies. There is some good, be it said, even in this—for it is a blessing, bountifully tending to Rest, to be suffered to know the worst. When all is done that can be done to your despite, there is nothing more for you to fear or fidget about;

and it is better, perhaps, to know that you can never see those fields and apple-blossoms again from your windows, than to live haunted by continual apprehensions of losing them. We soon get reconciled, as I have before said, to the inevitable. I purpose to say something presently about the Rest that comes from knowing the worst. I am now, when not hindered by my digressional infirmity, writing of the blessed Rest of Sundays. And I was proceeding to say that though now, in spite of the builder, I can sit on Sundays under my vine and saunter among flowers, it has not been always so; and that I have spent years of Sundays in town, under nearly every residential condition known to our middle-class humanity, in comfortable family dwelling-houses, in lodging-house "drawing-room floors," in chambers of Inns of Court, ay, and in the city proper, hard by that so-called "Mincing Lane," whereof Mr. Lamb discourses; and yet I protest that I have never failed to rise from my bed, lighter and happier on Sundays, than on any one of the six week-days. Not that I make wry faces at my work. We are upon the very best of terms with each other. Indeed, I might in this case adapt to my own uses the fine old chivalrous sentiment, and say,—

I should not love thee, *Work*, so well,
Loved I not *Sunday* more.

My selfish delight in Sunday is, that I am not compelled to do any work on that day, if I do not wish it, and that I ought not if I would; but there is a joy beyond this in seeing others going out for their Sunday holidays, in their best clothes, looking clean, and bright, and fresh, and whatever Mr. Lamb may say to the contrary, with a keen sense of the coming enjoyment written on their faces. I like to speculate on what they are going to do, as I see them starting when the morning air is fresh and the sun not very high above the house-tops, wondering whether they are going to see their old parents in the country (mayhap in the Workhouse) or a daughter in service, or only to get a little fresh air away from the smoke of London. And there were other pleasant and suggestive sights as seen from my chamber windows, not the least of which was this:—I was wont to see on Sunday mornings, in the bright summer-time, a little stream of people flowing under an archway from Lincoln's Inn Fields towards Covent Garden, and returning by the same channel. They went empty-handed and they returned full, each one, man or woman, carrying—I might almost write *hugging*—a pot of flowers; a geranium, a fuchsia, a verbena, or some other freely-blossoming plant. It mystified me for some time; but I learnt afterwards that there was an early sale of flowers on Sunday mornings in Covent Garden, and that purchases were to be made more cheaply at that hour than at any other. And it pleased me to think that a part of the wages paid on Saturday evening had been put aside for these Sunday-morning purchases; and though this buying and selling might, in the eyes of rigid Sabbatarians, be held, in some sort, as a violation of the Fourth Commandment, I could not help thinking that the Recording

Angel might well drop a tear upon the page that registered the offence. For the love of flowers, especially in sorely-tried Londoners, is a virtue in itself; and it greatly engenders Rest.

I would recommend every man, in the autumn of his life, to take to gardening, if he has not already experienced its pleasures. Of all occupations in the world it is the one which best combines repose and activity. It is rest-in-work or work-in-rest. It is not idleness; it is not stagnation—and yet it is perfect quietude. Like all things mortal, it has its failures and its disappointments, and there are some things hard to understand. But it is never without its rewards. And, perhaps, if there were nothing but successful cultivation, the aggregate enjoyment would be less. It is better for the occasional shadows that come over the scene. The discipline, too, is most salutary. It tries one's patience and it tries one's faith. The perpetual warfare, that seems ever to be going on between the animal and the vegetable world, is something strange and perplexing. It is hard to understand why the beautiful tender blossoms and the delicate fresh leaflets of my rose-trees should be covered with green flies and destroyed as soon as they are born. It is a mystery which I cannot solve—but I know that there is a meaning in it, and that it is all decreed for good, only that I am too ignorant to fathom it. And even in the worst of seasons there is far more to reward and encourage than to dishearten and to disappoint. There is no day of the year without something to afford tranquil pleasure to the cultivator of flowers, something on which the mind may rest (using the word in its double sense) with profit and delight. If there is no new surprise, no fresh discovery for you, there is always something to be done. "The garden is a constant source of amusement to us both," wrote Dr. Arnold in one of his delightful letters—he was writing of himself and wife; "there are always some little alterations to be made, some few spots where an additional shrub or two would be ornamental, something coming into blossom; so that I can always delight to go round and see how things are going on." In the spring and summer there is some pleasure-giving change visible every morning, something to fulfil and something to excite expectation. And even in the winter, flower-culture has its delights. If you have a green-house or conservatory, no matter how small, you have an indoors garden, in which you may watch the same changes and enjoy the same delights. And if you have not, you may still do something to preserve your nurslings during the rigours of the hybernal season. Indeed, there are few states of life, in which floriculture is not an available enjoyment. To rich and to poor it is a blessing equally accessible. "As gardening," it was observed by Sir William Temple, who has had a new lease of life in one of the best of Macaulay's *Essays*, "has been the inclination of kings and the choice of philosophers, so it has been the common favourite of public and private men, a pleasure of the greatest and the care of the meanest; and indeed an employment and a possession for which no man is too high or too

low." I am disposed, indeed, to think that to men of low estate it yields greater joys than to those who hail from high places. I have got a little garden about the size of a rich man's dining-table. I am as fond of it, and, when the roses are in bloom, as proud of it, too, as the Duke can be of his world-renowned Chatsworth. I do not suppose that if I could bring as many acres as I please under floral cultivation, and have as many gardeners as I choose to hire, with another Paxton at the head of them, I should derive from them all a tenth part of the enjoyment that is now vouchsafed to me by my little strip of suburban soil. Indeed, in that ducal ease, I should not be suffered to garden; I must be gardened for: they would be the gardener's roses, not mine; I should have merely the privilege of looking at them. And it is essential to any real enjoyment of a garden that you should be an autocrat in it, that you should do much of the work yourself, and have a particular knowledge of each individual flower. But there are lowlier gardeners even than I; there are gardens to which my diminutive domain is a Chatsworth—gardens limited to the capacity of a window-sill. I honour those window-gardeners, especially those who dwell in towns; in narrow streets or murky alleys; and whose homes are made beautiful by the smiles of the flowers in their windows; gardeners such as I have spoken of above, as seen from my windows in Lincoln's Inn, carrying their gardens in their hands, beautiful off-shoots of the great garden which ever flourishes between Long Acre and the Strand. And even of this window-gardening there are many degrees; descending even down to one delicate plant, reared perhaps from a slip beneficially given by a neighbour, in a fragment of a broken water-jug. There seems to be something of the old Paradiisiacal beatitude in these modest cultivations. I saw yesterday, as I journeyed homeward-bound, after my day's work, to the station, whence I take train to my suburb, a woman at a second-floor window in Westminster (it is a house ancient and decrepit, doubtless doomed to speedy deletion) amidst a perfect Eden of many-coloured and many-shaped flowers and creepers, picking off the dead leaves here and there. Neither youth nor beauty physically belonged to her; but the picture was not without a suggestiveness of youth and beauty; for the love of flowers keeps the heart young, and the greater the difficulty of indulging that love the greater the moral beauty of success in the cultivation of a purifying taste. I could readily associate with it the idea of a background, behind that festooned window, in which, notwithstanding all the ordinary troubles and disturbances of metropolitan work, there is, at appointed times, a fine air of repose—a soothing benignity of Rest.

But I am minded, having thus spoken of these lower strata of floriculture, to return for a little space to the higher. If I were to give way to the inclination to discourse upon this subject, and to illustrate it by examples drawn from ancient and modern history, showing how the greatest men of all ages have sought and found Rest in the contemplation of fields and flowers—the inexhaustible works of that benignant Nature, which "never doth betray the heart that is her own"—I should require

more sheets than I can find pages for my commentary. But I have been recently reading Lord Russell's *Life of Charles Fox*, and I do not know any more beautiful illustration of the love of Rest than is to be found in the story of the great statesman's retirement and the correspondence which accompanies it:—"At a period," writes Lord Russell, "when the prospects of office nearly vanished from his sight, when calumny loved to paint him as a man of disordered ambition and criminal designs, he was busy in the study of Homer, or lounging carelessly through his garden and expressing to his beloved nephew the full sense of his happiness and content. The trees and the flowers, the birds and the fresh breezes gave him an intense enjoyment, which those who knew his former life of politics and pleasure could hardly have imagined. To the capacious benevolence which longed to strike the chain from the African slave, he joined a daily practice of all the charities of life and a perception of the beautiful in nature, in literature, and in art, which was a source of constant enjoyment. With a simplicity of manners rare in great statesmen he united views the most profound, and a feeling heart which calumny could not embitter, nor years make cold, nor the world harden." The enjoyment of rest, which he derived from the sights and sounds of nature, from the beauty of the flowers and the songs of the birds, was intense; and with this went hand-in-hand the cultivation of literature, especially in its less laborious forms. He was writing history, but he turned aside to revel in poetry; and from his poetical studies he was diverted, at times, by his inquiries as to the season of nightingale-singing in different parts of the country. But, in the midst of all this, he had his misgivings. He could not help those qualms of conscience which rose up at odd times, and suggested that he ought to be at work again. Take the following from one of his letters in 1795, as illustrative of the great struggle within between the sense of duty and the longing for Rest:—"As to myself, I grow every day to think less of public affairs; possibly your coming home and taking a part in them might make me again more alive about them, but I doubt even that. The bills of this year appear to me to be a finishing stroke to everything like a spirit of liberty; and though the country did show some spirit whilst they were depending, yet I fear it is only a temporary feeling which they have quite forgotten. I wish I could be persuaded that it is right to quit public business, for I should like it to a degree that I cannot express; but I cannot yet think that it is not a duty to persevere. One may be of opinion that persevering is of no use; but ought a man who has engaged himself to the public to trust so entirely to a speculation of this sort as to go out of the common road, and to desert (for so it would be called) the public service? I think it can scarcely be right. But as for wishes, no one ever wished anything more. I am perfectly happy in the country. I have quite resources enough to employ my mind, and the great resource of all literature. I am fonder of literature every day."—[April 12, 1795.] And again, some years later:—"My feeling

is this—that notwithstanding nightingales, flowers, literature, history, &c., all which, however, I conceive to be good and substantial reasons for staying here, I would nevertheless go to town if I saw any chance of my going being serviceable to the public, or (which, in my view of the case, is the same thing) to the party; which I love both as a party, and on account of many of the principal individuals who compose it. I feel myself quite sure that this is not now the case; and that if I were to go the best I could hope for would be that I should do no mischief.”—[April 19, 1801.] The love of repose, of flowers and singing-birds had grown upon him in the interval, but still ever and anon came goadings of self-reproach, and the much-coveted rest seemed to be continually slipping away from him. Thus, three years afterwards, he wrote:—“I am going up to town to-morrow, to stay I know not how many weeks. I dislike it to a degree you can hardly conceive, but I feel it is right, and resolve to do it handsomely Nightingales not come yet, and it will be well, if I do not quite miss hearing them this spring; but I will do it so handsomely that I hope you will hear from your other correspondents that I have quite turned my mind to polities again, and am as eager as in former days. Pray remember to inquire at what time nightingales usually appear and sing where you are.”—[April 9, 1804.] There is something very pleasant in this last touch of nature. The nightingales again! What a change from those soft songsters to the obstreperousness of the House of Commons. There are many, doubtless, whom we are wont, in these days, to think self-seeking and ambitious, because they continue to take part in the strife of public affairs, even when health and strength are failing and the voice is growing weak. We seldom take account of the sacrifices which they make. How many would give up place and power if they did not feel within them a strong sense of duty, compelling them to listen to the calls of their country. No one who has tried both, doubts for a moment that Literature is more delightful than Politics. What rest our two great party-leaders must have found in their Homeric studies and translations. What repose must have been the lot of that other statesman who wrote the *Life of Fox* above quoted, and that other life, in which he passed from polities to poetry, and manifested as keen an appreciation of the one as of the other. And who can fathom the depths of that intense amusement and recreation which another party-leader, *sui generis*, must have experienced, when he hoaxed and hoodwinked the world by publishing a fashionable novel, intended to satirise the perverted literary taste and to gauge the literary flunkism of the age? I think it must have added half-a-dozen good working-years to his life. He has achieved many successes, but none equal to this last. I do not say that I applaud it. He had before laid bare the rottenness of party polities, and it was still less pleasant to see the literary criticism of the nineteenth century thus shown to be a pretentious sham. But it will have its uses. My roses are not less sweet because the soil from which they grow is manured with the vilest offal. If this stupendous hoax,

which must have shaken the sides of Beaconsfield right merrily, should, as we apprehend it will, teach criticism a little more caution and conscientiousness, it will not have been played out in vain.

I have spoken, incidentally above, of the Rest which comes from knowing or suffering the worst—the quiet that follows an explosion. It is like the stillness now succeeding the thunder-storm, amidst which some of these lines have been written in the early morning. Almost every one, in some shape or other, has experienced, after a long period of painful doubt and suspense and anxiety—of those fears which cling to you in the day, which haunt your sleep, and oppress you with deadly sickness at the “shuddering dawn”—the infinite relief of the dreaded *ir* having actually come upon you. There is an end, then, of all your strugglings to escape your doom—all your writhings and wrestlings—all the miserable turmoil and excitement of battle with an impending fate. I have heard that men whose business affairs have been in an embarrassed state for months and years have felt, when the “smash” came at last, a quietude of spirit, a repose of mind, such as they had not felt for a long and weary time. The worst had come; and bankruptcy itself was not so bad as the fear of bankruptcy. I have seen, indeed, with my own eyes, men who had shrunk and shrivelled into an extreme state of tenuity, who had grown pale and wrinkled and care-worn, hollow-eyed, and haggered-mouthed, under the pressure of their difficulties, make their appearance, after a little space in the Fleet Prison, or some kindred institution, quite sleek and rosy and bright-faced, jaunty and debonnaire in their manner, ten years younger every way, as though the worst had come upon them and there was nothing now to be feared. Of course, this indicates a certain obtuseness of conscience and want of sympathy with others, in favour of which I have nothing to say. I am only speaking of the Rest that ensues from the *ir* having come upon us. I can easily imagine, too, that an offender against the laws of God and man, endeavouring to escape from the pursuing hand of Justice, might feel infinite relief when the hand has been laid on him and he can no longer evade its grasp. I think that wretched Falkland—rare product of the genius of William Godwin—that typical man, vain fugitive from a remorseless and untiring Nemesis, must have rejoiced when the terrible pursuit was at an end. Even death itself has less terror than the perpetual uplooking at the Damoclean sword impending above one’s head. It is related in cotemporary annals of the Great Indian rebellion, that, on more than one occasion, there was a sense of infinite relief after the storm had burst, and that, although the mutinous sepoyes were everywhere surging around our Christian people, there was less misery in the knowledge of the actual past, than in the vague apprehension of the impending evil.

It was in some mood of this kind that a dear friend, who, with the best intentions in the world, was always in trouble—one of those men who believe every one and everything, who are never to be convinced by any failures or misfortunes, who can never profit by experience or grow wise

by suffering, but go on to the end, with unfailing trust in humanity, once wrote, on what he thought the eve of a crisis, which never came after all—for though some friends misled, it cannot be said betrayed him, others were staunch to the last:—

Rest!—Yes; a prison it may be. 'Tis well!
I have fought the battle long, and I have lost—
Trusted my friends, and counted not the cost
Of this blind faith in others. So I fell.
And now that I have long been tempest-tost,
I find my haven gladly in a cell.
Water and bread, and just a little light,
And air it may be, and full leave to pray,
And I shall not much care for Man's despite,
Waiting, in God's good time, a better day—
Better to lay one's arms down and to wait,
Than to fight on, sore-spent, all gashed and gory;
For the time cometh, be it soon or late,
When perfect Rest is link'd with perfect Glory.

I have a few words more to say in conclusion. There is something very soothing and solacing, amidst the cares and distractions, the ceaseless goings-to-and-fro of active life, in the thought of some day being able to lay down one's burdens and to cease from the strenuous business to which one has been harnessed for long years—to make over the traces and the collar and the reins, which one has worn so long, and the bit one has champed for nearly half-a-century,—to a younger and stronger horse, and to go out quietly to grass. And yet there are some men who shrink from the thought—who have a vague presentiment that if the harness cease to brace them up any longer, they will fall down by the way-side and die. I think it is a miserable mistake. Every man should listen to the warnings which benevolent Nature is continually uttering to him. Whether in the autumn of life we are cautioned now and then to pause,* or whether in the winter of life we are told that the

* Whilst I am correcting the proofs of this article, I read in one of the daily papers this gratifying intelligence:—"The Prime Minister is not ill, still less has he suffered what can be called 'a relapse,' however 'slight.' He has simply been conscious that those were right who advised a little rest after recent hard labours, if he wished actually to avoid any return of indisposition which has before been induced by overwork. And so successful has been the resort to repose, that he will probably be in his place again to-day, or at the latest to-morrow, in the full enjoyment of that excellent health which all have noticed recently." Here, indeed, is an example to lesser men. "A stitch in time saves nine," in your constitution as well as in your coat. It is true wisdom to take heed of these slight warnings. The hardest worker in high place that I ever knew, having rejected some timely admonitions of this kind, was mercifully laid aside by a broken head in the hunting-field and compelled to cease from the labour of years. And now he has gone back to the councils of the nation, all the better for that disaster in the field.

time has come for us to cease altogether from work, we should never reject those promptings. The time must come when younger men will do our work better, and, if we remain still at the grindstone, we shall be little better than cumberers of the earth. Nay, we may be something worse—miserable spectacles of decay, not even stately ruins. Shall we cling thus to a mere mockery and make-belief of work—sorry “drivellers and shows”—with dim eyes, and palsied hands and vagrant memories? Let us take our pensions thankfully in good time; let us be content to be superannuated; let us go cheerfully into retirement before people say that we ought to be kicked into it. At the close of life we ought to be left to our repose—to have time to take account of eternity. To work after we have ceased to be good workmen is only to take away so much from the good work already done. We may then reverse the words of the aphorism above cited, and say, “*Orare est laborare.*” We are never too old to pray. Let us be thankful that we have time and rest to do it; and hopefully wait until the summons comes—“Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter into thy REST.”

AN OPTIMIST.

Wanted, a King.

AN ADVENTURE IN THE REALM OF TOBAGO.

I.

I BEG your pardon for introducing myself to you so abruptly: I am one of the Teuton princes disestablished by Count von Quickmarch. If you look into any geography of some five or six years ago, you will find in it the Principality of Pumpernickel, four thousand two hundred inhabitants; climate, salubrious; religion, none to speak of; habits of the people, civil but rapacious. That was my state, where I lived happy, I and my sires before me, and where I should have reigned to this day if it hadn't been for Quickmarch and for Kopperpfennig.

Kopperpfennig he's my Prime Minister. When the war broke out between the King of Pomerania and the Emperor of Moravia, and when we Princes of the Teutonic Confederation had to make up our minds and take part with one or the other, I was in mighty perplexity as to which side I should send my contingent of thirty-one men. So I said to Kopperpfennig: "Look here, which of these two do you think it is that's going to thrash the other; for, you know, we mustn't make a mistake." "No," answered Kopperpfennig thoughtfully, and soon after he added, "It's the Emperor that's going to thrash the King, I'm sure of it. The King's not got a leg to stand on; he'll be beaten out of the field in three days; then, we'll get them to give us a piece of his kingdom to aggrandise Pumpernickel." "Yes," I rejoined, "we will." And, seeing Kopperpfennig was so sure of it, I wrote a letter to the King of Pomerania, saying I was sorry to see him so altogether wrong in the quarrel, and that I couldn't possibly bring it to my conscience to fight for such a cause as his. I signed this letter and folded it, but just as I was going to seal it, I said once more to Kopperpfennig: "Look here, if you're not positively certain, there's still time to change and to write to the Emperor instead." But Kopperpfennig stuck to it that things would take place exactly as he had predicted; and, to show how sure he was, he opened an atlas and pointed out the precise spot on the map where the King of Pomerania was going to get his thrashing. Three weeks afterwards, when the King of Pomerania had routed the Emperor of Moravia, taken my thirty-one men prisoners, and driven me out of Pumpernickel, Kopperpfennig drew up a memoir to prove that everything ought to have gone off just the other way. I didn't read the memoir, but I thought poorly of Kopperpfennig, and I should have dismissed him, if he'd consented to go. But he wouldn't.

I need not tell you what I suffered at being turned out of my prin-

cipality. If you've ever had a crown on your head, you must be aware that there's nothing on earth so painful to lose as that. You see, I used to enjoy myself being prince; and I don't understand what right Count von Quickmarch had to come and interfere with me. Pumpernickel wasn't large, I know, but then it isn't large states that make happy kings. Besides, it was bigger than Schinkenhausen, the neighbouring duchy. The Duke of Schinkenhausen he took part with the King of Pomerania, as I should have done if it hadn't been for Kopperpfennig; and, when the war was over, he had a piece of Pumpernickel given him as a reward. I never liked that Duke of Schinkenhausen; I always said that he was an intriguer, without any principles.

However, it was no use crying; the thing was done, and the most I could hope for was to obtain some compensation from the shameless Government that had despoiled me. I had not been dethroned a week before I was in Pomerania trying to procure myself an audience with the King, who is good-natured and a sort of cousin of mine—in fact, all we Teuton princes are cousins. And here I beg to enter my most energetic protest against the manner in which I was treated on this occasion by Count von Quickmarch. Not content with depriving me of that which was mine by divine right, of that upon which it was rank sacrilege to lay his hand, this statesman added insult to injury by requesting me to leave Pomerania without delay, and even went so far as to provide me with a police-agent, who was commissioned to hasten my exit. Had it not been for Lotty, I must have foregone all hopes of indemnity, for I denounce to the opprobrium of every loyal mind, as illusory and derisive, the suggestion of Quickmarch's that I should state my grievances on paper, and forward them to him "for consideration." Lotty's my wife, and very quick and clever she is. With her rests the honour of having defeated the fell machinations of our enemy; for, whilst I was buckling my portmanteau with dignity under the eye of the police-agent, and with Kopperpfennig whimpering in a corner, she forced her way into the King's presence, and there cried and sobbed so that our cousin ended by feeling touched. To tell the truth, he was a little frightened, our cousin, at all that Quickmarch had been doing. Brought up in the wise and religious traditions of Teuton royalty, he was perfectly aware that celestial vengeance inevitably overtakes those who do violence to established thrones. But for the perfidious influence acquired over him by Quickmarch, I am persuaded he would never have ventured upon the Moravian war, much less have deposed any of us, his relatives, and maybe the thought occurred to him, as he listened to Lotty, that perhaps some day his turn might come to beg, and that, in that case, Retributive Justice would surely act by him as he had done by us. Anyhow, Lotty carried it. After she had shed tears during an hour until her eyes were red, and almost broken her heart by relating how we had been driven from a land where we had ruled in peace, and been torn from the embraces of a people who adored us, the King gave in, and tried to console her by the promise that the beggarly five

million thalers which we asked for as compensation should be paid to my account. You will not be surprised to learn that, when Quickmarch heard of this, his unworthy soul was filled with resentment, and he strove to induce our cousin to retract his word. But Providence confounded this nefarious design, the King kept his promise, the cheque was signed,* and the only condition imposed on us was that we should leave Pomerania at once; which I did with pleasure, for I despise the land in which Quickmarch was born, and wish to have nothing more to say to it.

Well, but now that we had got the five million thalers, what were we to do and where were we to go? This double question was debated at length between us three, that is, between Lotty and me and Kopperpfennig, but it was some time before we could come to any decision. You see a dethroned prince isn't like an ordinary person; he can't go and put up at an hotel until something turns up; he must have a household somewhere, live with befitting splendour, and be prepared for events. Heaven be praised, I had succeeded in getting the crown jewels conveyed safely abroad before the Pomeranian troops invaded Pumpernickel, and at the moment of my going away I had had presence of mind enough to see that all the money left in the public treasury was deposited in my travelling-carriage; moreover, I had invested a good deal in foreign securities, whilst I was on the throne, so that, what with this and that, and my cousin's five million thalers, there was no reason why we should deny ourselves any of the luxuries in keeping with our high position. Lotty was for accepting the invitation of the Emperor of the Gauls, who wrote very kindly to offer us a refuge in his capital. He is no friend of Quickmarch's, the Emperor; and I'm sure he would have received us well. But I don't like those Gauls, they're always sniggering. There was one who came once to Pumpernickel, and before he'd been there a fortnight I found he was sending ridiculous pictures about me and my army to a comic paper in his country. It appears he was an artist; but, of course, when I discovered how he was abusing my hospitality, I sent for him, and said, "Look here, you'll leave my dominions in four-and-twenty hours." "Oh, it doesn't require so much as that, Prince," he rejoined, grinning; "it's a matter of five minutes." And when he got home he revenged himself by editing all sorts of miserable jokes about the size of my princedom, saying that when I wanted to practise my artillery, I had to ask leave of my neighbour, Sckinkenhausen, to set up the targets in his duchy—a base falsehood, if ever there was one, for I had no artillery. Kopperpfennig he was of opinion that we should go to Anglia, where, he said, there were no revolutions, and people had a great respect for princes; but Lotty didn't take to the idea. She had read in a Gallic book that it was foggy all the year round in Anglia,

* I regret to state that when my ex-subjects heard I had received five million thalers, they urged it was to them the money should have gone; the vain pretext being that, as it was they who had borne all the expenses of the war, they it was who ought to have the compensation, not I, who had spent nothing. I cite this as a signal and saddening instance of the decline of loyalty in this godless, abandoned age.

besides which, the royal family of the country were connected with that of Pomerania, and were therefore more likely to be on Quickmarch's side than on ours. As for me, I voted for settling in some place where we should be close and handy in the event of any new troubles occurring amongst the Teutons. There's nothing like keeping one's eye open: please the Fates, the whole of Europe might be plunged into a war to-morrow; in which case, by a little good management and watching of my opportunity, I might contrive to get back into Pumpernickel. My view of the case prevailed. Kopperpfennig acknowledged my sagacity, and it was eventually decided that we should take up our abode on the territory of my ally, the Ki—— but I won't tell you the name of the sovereign, for I receive quite enough begging-letters as it is, and I should be overwhelmed with them if I made my address public.

Naturally, I refused to abdicate, and if you have heard anything to the contrary, you must set it down as a lying fabrication of Quickmarch's. It is true that, whilst the negotiations for the five millions were pending, the unscrupulous adviser of my cousin got me to sign a deed by which I resigned all claims upon Pumpernickel now and for ever. But I decline to consider this deed valid. It was evidently extorted from me by compulsion, and I was no sooner established in my new dwelling than I launched a solemn protest in the face of Europe, sending a copy to all the crowned heads, not excepting Schinkenhausen, who had sordidly accepted a portion of my property. Despite Quickmarch and everybody else, I maintain that I am still Ruling Prince of Pumpernickel, and I shall always maintain it. I dispense orders of knighthood (Order of the Braces of Pumpernickel); I confer titles of nobility (Goldentrauser, my chamberlain, showed me this morning letters from seventeen retired grocers who wanted to be ennobled); I have my Cabinet—Kopperpfennig and another; and I am officially represented by envoys at no less than two European courts. Moreover, I am sedulous that in my household every one of the prescriptions of state etiquette shall be observed to the letter. Lotty has her maids of honour and her mistress of the robes who walk behind us, two and two, with my equerries and my aide-de-camp, when we go in state to our chapel of a Sunday, to hear Gelbgesicht, my almoner, preach; and, in order to show the world that even in small things we rise superior to misfortune, and are as much prince and princess as ever, we never miss going into complimentary mourning when anybody belonging to a royal, princely, or ducal house dies. In fact, we wear black clothes some forty weeks out of the fifty-two.

Mind, I am not telling you all this to raise myself unduly in your eyes. Gelbgesicht preaches on Sundays that we ought to be humble, and I agree with him, for humility is a virtue which I often recommended to my subjects. In taking up my pen, I have been urged by loftier motives than those which push the common herd of mankind into print; I have considered it my duty to chronicle here, for the benefit of history, certain important political transactions in which I have been recently mixed up—

transactions in which the fate of a great nation was more or less involved. The foregoing particulars relative to my unjust expulsion from Pumpernickel were necessary for the elucidation of what is to come. They are intended merely as a preface.

II.

One morning, a few months ago, whilst Lotty and I were sitting looking out of the window, and Kopperfennig was catching flies to amuse himself, our master of the ceremonies entered and announced that a gentleman with a dark face was waiting down below, requesting the honour of an audience. The gentleman had dirty boots : he had neglected to write to my chamberlain Goldentrauser, as etiquette requires, to state his reasons for craving an interview, and he declined to give his name. I ordered the Master of the Ceremonies to send him about his business.

A quarter of an hour afterwards Goldentrauser himself came up with a card in his hand on which was engraven :

EL CONDE DE ALPACAS Y MERINO Y COTTONADAS ;

and in a corner, written in pencil, the words—

PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF TOBAGO.

Goldentrauser had seen the stranger and learned from him that his business was of the utmost importance ; that he had most particular motives for desiring to see me immediately. He had even added that every hour was of moment ; and that he had come straight from Tobago without once changing his linen.

This announcement falling so suddenly upon us, caused some commotion. Lotty, Kopperfennig, Goldentrauser, and I discussed the language of the stranger without for a while seeing our way to what we ought to do. It was most unprecedented, a plenipotentiary presenting himself in this plight, without court-dress, without attachés, and without having first displayed his credentials to Kopperfennig. Impossible to hurl a more complete defiance at established usage. On the other hand, however, the man's manner, by Goldentrauser's showing, was so impressive, and his mission so evidently serious, that we hesitated to send him away. After anxious deliberation, it was arranged that Goldentrauser should lend him a court-dress, that Kopperfennig should go and examine such credentials as he had, and that if these proved satisfactory, I would make an exception in his favour, and hear what he had to say.

Half an hour elapsed, and then Kopperfennig returned, declaring himself partially satisfied, though the plenipotentiary had objected to tell him his business. Another ten minutes, and the Conde de Alpacas y Merinos y Cottonadas was ushered up in person : Goldentrauser, in his official dress and with his key of office, preceded him ; Schrivelhoson, my second equerry, walked behind. I had profited by the half hour to assume the Order of the Braces of Pumpernickel ; Lotty had put on a little powder ;

Kopperpfennig had slipped on his uniform, and was holding his seals in his hand. We were all silent.

The Conde de Cottonadas walked forward, and made the three bows which usage demands, I returning his salutation with one bow. He then thanked me in a deplorably foreign accent for having been graciously pleased to grant him an audience, and expressed a hope that as what he had to say was a strict secret, I would suffer him to address me in private. But to this I replied that the constitution of Pumpernickel did not allow of my being conferred with on political matters otherwise than in the presence of a responsible adviser, and that the most I could do for him was to request my chamberlain and equerries, and the princess's maids of honour, to withdraw. This was accordingly done; and Lotty, Kopperpfennig, the plenipotentiary and I remained alone.

After casting a glance all round the room to make sure that nobody was hidden anywhere—for it seems that people are fond of mystery in Tobago, and the diplomatists of that land are suspicious—the Count came close up to me, and pitching his voice almost in a whisper, said :

“ Your Highness is aware that the realm of Tobago is at present kingless ? ”

“ I am, sir,” I replied sternly, for I make it a point to mark my antipathy for revolution whenever I have the occasion. “ I am aware, sir, that you lately possessed a virtuous and religious queen whom you dethroned; and your present difficulty in finding a new monarch is without any doubt a judgment on Tobago for its culpable behaviour towards its sovereign.”

This way of looking at the case appeared new to the Count de Alpaeas y Merinos y Cottonadas. He winced, coloured slightly (his dark skin turning purple), but continued, nevertheless, in a polite tone, and addressing Lotty as much as me :—“ Alas ! your Highness, it is a kindly failing in upright princes to attribute to all their royal colleagues the virtues which they themselves possess. I doubt not that had Tobago been as much blessed as your Highness's late subjects were, there would have been nought but loyalty from one land's end to the other. Unfortunately it was otherwise.” And he sighed.

Unable to feel harshly towards a plenipotentiary who spoke with such courtesy, I requested him to be seated.

“ I read all about the revolution in the newspapers,” put in Lotty, reproachfully ; “ and I don't think it was very civil of the people of Tobago to burn a lady in effigy as they did.”

“ Nor to drive their Prime Minister out of the country by threatening to hang him,” ejaculated Kopperpfennig, with feeling.

“ There are queens, madam, whose effigies would be perpetually on fire—in the hearts of their subjects,” responded the Count de Cottonadas, with a bow (he was really very gallant, that ambassador). “ The people of Tobago, madam, never rebel against grace and beauty,” he added, “ even when grace and beauty are tyrannical.”

Lotty blushed and fanned herself; the Count proceeded: "It is a mournful fact, your Highness, that Tobago has not hitherto been fortunate with its monarchs. There was one who dressed in black, and established a tribunal which burned an infinite number of Tobagians on account of their religion. When he was gone the people heaved a sigh of relief; but they sighed too soon: for those who came after this prince took pattern by him, like a copy-book, so that for the last three hundred years the chronicles of Tobago have been a painful record in which burned Tobagians alternate with Tobagians hanged and shot. I think it would be difficult to compress into so small a space as three centuries such a curious variety of wretched monarchs as those with which Providence, in its just decrees, has thought fit to afflict Tobago. I assure your Highness that the majority of them were not worth the salt they consumed in the bread they ate; and the inevitable consequence of their unlucky reigns is that Tobago, disgusted with the whole race of them, has at last arrived at this conclusion—that the only logical course to pursue is—

"To set up a republic."

This indecent exclamation issued from Kopperpfennig. I ought to mention here, that before becoming a Minister, Kopperpfennig had been what they call a radical, and although he had solemnly pledged himself on taking office to abandon his former convictions, yet in moments of distraction he would occasionally forget himself in the way just seen. I cast a withering look towards him, and he held his tongue for the next ten minutes.

"No, not set up a republic," resumed the plenipotentiary, with a slight shrug at the interruption, "but select a new king as different from the others as possible" (he bowed). "A king belonging to a new race, not wasteful, yet withal stately" (he bowed again); "a king imbued to the full with all the sage principles of constitutional government" (here a third bow, into which he infused much respect).

"You are probably thinking of Monsieur le Duc de Nondépensier?" I answered: "a frugal prince, as I have heard say."

"Alas! your Highness," answered the Count de Alpacas y Merinos y Cottonadas. He exclaimed "Alas!" very dismally, and I said, "What do you mean by 'Alas'?"

"I mean, your Highness, that the Duke's candidature has proved an impossibility. Our powerful neighbour, the Emperor of the Gauls, has from the first announced his intention of remaining strictly neutral as to our choice of a king; only he has thought fit to make an exception with regard to the Duke of Nondépensier, whom he considers the enemy of his dynasty, and whom he could not consequently bear to see upon a throne."

"Perhaps, then," I suggested, "you mean that battlesome Prince Don Carolus, though I fancy he comes in straight line from those kings who burned and hanged you."

"We had thought of him," rejoined the plenipotentiary, sadly, "and many of us would have taken him gladly enough, spite of that little objection you mention; but the Emperor of the Gauls, whilst desiring to remain strictly neutral, gave us clearly to understand that the same reasons which militated against the Duke held good, though, to be sure, in a less degree, against the Prince. "Choose any one but these two," said his Majesty; "but against both the Duke and the Prince I oppose my veto."

I remembered that there had been some talk about electing to the throne of Tobago a schoolboy prince of sixteen. I asked the Count de Cottonadas whether it was not this young gentleman towards whom the Tobagians looked for their future happiness.

"Your Highness is not mistaken," answered the plenipotentiary, with a sigh; "the young gentleman would have been a most welcome choice: fresh-minded and confiding as he doubtless was, we could have moulded him into any shape that pleased us. But, unluckily, he was nearly allied to a great reigning house, and the Emperor of the Gauls at once pointed out that, though anxious to remain strictly neutral, he could never consent to see the balance of power disturbed."

There was an ex-sovereign very fond of gardening and music, who had also been frequently mentioned in connection with the Tobagian throne; but upon my pronouncing his name in turn the Conde de Alpacas y Merinos y Cottonadas shook his head despondingly. "A most excellent king he would have made, your Highness; and I had the honour of almost going down on my knees to entreat his acceptance of the crown; but he refused, and perhaps it is well that he did so: for the Emperor of the Gauls sent privately to remind us that, though longing to remain strictly neutral, he could not forget that the prince who liked gardening might be the means of an eventual union between the Kingdoms of Tobago and Portovino, in which case his Majesty, instead of having two rival countries on his frontier, would find himself face to face with a powerful, and possibly dangerous, neighbour. When his Majesty sends reminders of this kind, it is prudent to take the hint."

"Well, but," asked Lotty, still fanning herself, "whom are you going to choose, then?" And Kopperpfennig, breaking the silence into which his confusion had plunged him, repeated the question: "Whom are you going to choose, then?"

There was a moment's pause. The Count de Alpacas y Merinos y Cottonadas had risen, and was standing before me. Suddenly he dropped one knee on the hearth-rug, and laid at my feet a roll of parchment which he had extracted from his pocket.

"Your Highness, we have been trying in vain to find a king for the last two years," he exclaimed piteously. "All the princes who are willing to accept the throne are ineligible; and those who are eligible refuse to have anything to do with us. If this goes on much longer, we shall be the laughing-stocks of Christendom. The moment has arrived for appealing to your magnanimity. We beseech you to accept the crown of Tobago."

III.

I confess I did not sleep soundly that night. If a man tosses and turns in his bed when he has won a few thousand ducats at roulette or stock-jobbing, what is it when he has unexpectedly won the crown of such a kingdom as Tobago? This Tobago has over twenty millions of inhabitants, it would hold a myriad of Pumpernickels, and it boasts a standing army which, in good hands, might be made to match Quickmarch's. This last thought buzzed in my head through the live-long night. In my agitated slumbers, I saw myself commanding a host of my brave Tobagians, and driving Quickmarch across the River Whine. How could he stand, Quickmarch, against me and my ally, the Emperor of Moravia, and my other ally, the Emperor of the Gauls, whom I dreamed of as already marshalled on my side? Oh, I assure you it was soothing to imagine Quickmarch run! Next, I beheld myself riding triumphantly into Pumpernickel, amidst the acclamations of the populace, and with Quickmarch between two policemen in a cab behind. Nothing was wanting to make the ovation complete: tapestry at the windows, showering down of flowers from the balconies, waving of hats and handkerchiefs from the pavement, national anthem of Pumpernickel by the children of the ragged-schools; ignominious flight of Schinkenhausen in just apprehension of my wrath. Then the scene changed, and there was a congress of Sovereigns, held on a raft somewhere in the midst of a river, like at Tilsitt, in which I and the two Emperors had it all our own way. Pomerania was dismembered; my cousin the king, as compensation, received one out of those beggarly five millions he had given me; Schinkenhausen was condemned to perpetual banishment, and his lands confiscated with no indemnity whatever; Pumpernickel, and all the land surrounding it for two hundred leagues, was annexed as a Teuton bulwark to my realm of Tobago. As for Quickmarch, we put him on a lonely island, with chains to his legs, to teach him humanity and respect for the rights of others. Like the changing patterns of the kaleidoscope, this dream went on assuming every variety of hue in my dizzy brain from midnight to sunrise. When I awoke, I got up and dipped my head in a basin of water, feeling as if it had all been a nightmare, and as if the plenipotentiary's offer of the preceding day was only a fantastic delusion of my own.

But no—it was all true enough. Lotty had been dreaming too—about the Civil List of Tobago. We had kept the Conde de Alpacas y Merinos y Cottonadas to dinner the night before, and he had given us the fullest particulars as to the riches of his country, and the extent to which the public purse was capable of being drawn upon. Very pleasantly had he talked, too, about the scenic beauties of Tobago and the courtesy of its inhabitants. As he raised a glass of Amontillado to his lips and pledged me to a glorious reign, he painted in glowing words all the things of which the Tobagians are fond and proud: wine and olives, fair skies and

sunshine, silver moonlight and guitars, the tinkling of mule-bells along rock-bordered roads, and the ringing cheers of ten thousand voices in a bull-ring ; the flashing of dark eyes behind a black mantilla, the fluttering of a fan to hide a blush or smile, the splashing of fountains in the courtyards of marble palaces, and the giddy steps of the *seguidilla* to the tune of castanettes and tambourine. I noticed that he forbore to speak about the banditti, the pronunciamientos, and the stilettos, which, I had heard, were favoured institutions in his country ; but, probably, he forgot. Anyhow, he wrought us into enthusiasm ; that is, I was enthusiastic, and Lotty was enthusiastic, and so was he. But Goldentrauser, my chamberlain, and the others of the household, hadn't the opportunity of being so likewise : for, by the Count's strenuous recommendation, the whole thing was kept a secret from them.

This secrecy, he explained to me, was one of the prime conditions of success ; it was absolutely necessary that our first steps should be taken in the dark. At that moment the eyes of all Europe were fixed upon Tobago. The Emperor of the Gauls had got his candidate, Quickmarch had very possibly got his, and each in his way was earnestly doing his best to set the five or six political parties of the realm by the ears. The only chance of pacifying and conciliating everybody, was by making my candidacieship burst suddenly like a thunderclap over the land, and having me elected off-hand before any one knew for certain who I was, or had time to intrigue against me. Cottonadas had been commissioned by his Government to accompany me to one of the frontier towns in the north of Tobago. We were to travel *incognito* by night ; Lotty might come with me if I pleased, but no one else. At the frontier town we should find the Provisional Government, who, after hearing me swear allegiance to the Tobagian Constitution, would hastily convoke the Cortes, and march me into the capital, with an escort of artillery, &c., in order to overrule any possible opposition. Subsequently these arrangements had to be modified so as to include Kopperpfennig. Upon being informed of what was preparing he declined with obstinacy to be left behind.

I might here fill some pages with reports of further searching conversations held between myself and the Count de Cottonadas with reference to my future kingdom. A good deal might be said, too, depictive of my intimate feelings with regard to the new career that was opening before me. I prefer to abridge by stating simply that within six-and-thirty hours after the arrival of the plenipotentiary of Tobago, Lotty, Cottonadas, I, and Kopperpfennig were travelling mysteriously in a first-class carriage, under the name of the Ganser family. Our destination was the frontier town of St. Sebastinado.

You may be sure Lotty was in a fine flutter all the way, especially whilst journeying through the territory of the Emperor of the Gauls, lest any guard, in putting his head through the window for tickets, should recognize us as the Ruling Prince and Princess of Pumpernickel. At all the stoppages I buried my features in a newspaper, and Lotty let down her

veil to prevent any such catastrophe. But I am thankful to say our alarms were unnecessary,—it was, doubtless, owing to our travelling in the night that we were so profoundly unknown wherever we went.

“ Santo Sebastinado ! Santo Sebastinado ! ” shouted some porters at the end of a couple of days’ flying over railways ; and sure enough therero we were—it was our goal. Upon crossing the frontier at a spot marked by posts, red, white, and blue on one side, red and yellow on the other, the Count de Cottonadas had uncovered himself and said : “ Sire, we are in your Majesty’s dominions,”—words which had sent a noble thrill through me. The behaviour of the Count, I must here record, had been perfect throughout the whole journey. He neither forgot his place nor once ventured to advance opinions not entirely agreeing with mine. To mark my sense of his intelligence and propriety I conferred upon him the honour of shaking his hand after the highly becoming speech just reported. I also made a mental note that I would reward him out of the public taxes as soon as I was installed in my capital.

Upon getting out of the train, there were no regiments to meet us on the platform or anything of that kind. The arrangements for secrecy were all admirable. Two persons only, wrapped up in dark cloaks and with slouched felt hats over their eyes, were striding up and down smoking cigarettes in the waiting-room. There was a rapid exchange of signals between them and Cottonadas, a hurried double bow to me and Lotty, and then the whole party of us made for a couple of cabs drawn up outside the station. We were not off yet, though, for there were still the custom-house formalities to go through. Lotty had found it quite impossible to move without eleven boxes : I had brought five, and Kopperpfennig three ; the Count de Cottonadas was troubled only with a carpet-bag, containing, as he told us, two paper-collars and a sandwich-box—I have observed by-the-by that frequent changes of linen do not form part of established usage in Tobago. The customs’ officers perfectly understood their duties ; a couple of half ducats distributed secured immunity for my boxes and Lotty’s, and the whole visit would have been over in two minutes had it not been for Kopperpfennig, whose qualities do not come out with great brightness where expedition is required, and who seized this opportunity for entering into an altercation with a functionary who wanted to confiscate a bottle of schnapps of his, or induce him to pay duty on it. At last, however, we got free at the expense of the schnapps, abandoned with an energetic *Gehe zum Teufel, Spitzbube*, and were stowed into the two cabs, Lotty, I, Cottonadas, and Kopperpfennig in the first, the two strange Tobagians in the other. We had wanted Kopperpfennig to ride in this second cab, so as to equalize the burdens ; but on perceiving that the strangers still wore their hats slouched, that their cloaks muffled them up completely, and that there was nothing visible of their faces, he had entered his vigorous protest against travelling alone in their company.

The vehicles once in motion, Cottonadas explained that we were not going to an hotel, as public hostellries had been thought unsafe. The members of

the Provisional Government were assembled in a country-house hired for our reception at a few minutes' distance from the town. Cottonadas also informed us, for the first time, at this juncture, that, as party feeling happened to be running high, the supporters of Don Carolus or the Duke of Nondépensier would not be likely to make much difficulty about firing at us if they suspected our business. It occurred to me that this piece of intelligence might have been advantageously imparted along with the after-dinner description of the peculiarities of Tobago; but I said nothing, for I found it necessary to reassure Lotty, who, at the mention of firing, had exclaimed in alarm, "Why, do you mean firing in earnest?" to which Cottonadas gave the comforting reply, "Your Highness, we are always in earnest in Tobago."

A ten minutes' jolting along a dark road (for it was already night), a quick passage through a long straggling street in which glaring new villas with stuccoed walls alternated with Dutch-fashioned gable-houses, and so reminded one of a patchwork quilt—a passing cry of *Buenos noches* from two individuals with halberds and lanterns, whom Cottonadas explained to be local policemen—and we were once more on a road, devoid of gas-lamps, which called up to Kopperpfennig's recollection the High Street of Pumpernickel. Another ten minutes, and the pace slackened; yet another minute and there was a sweep through a gate, a grating of wheels on gravel, and a dead stop. We were at the country-house. With great alacrity Cottonadas jumped out, a door was opened, and a quick stream of light burst upon us; the two muffled Tobagians hurried out of their cab to receive us: one gave his arm to Lotty, the other made a salaam to me. Three other Tobagians, but unmuffled, issued from the door, and went through a series of courtesies under the portico. Then this door closed upon us, and we were all marching, nine of us together, up a staircase, and so into a lighted drawing-room, into which the muffled Tobagian, who was escorting Lotty, led the way. A pause now, a laying down of wraps and cloaks on the table; and then, ranging themselves into a semicircle, the five Tobagians (Cottonadas stood behind) made obeisance in unison, with hats in hand and heads bent. We were in the presence of the Provisional Government of Tobago.

IV.

Coming along in the train Cottonadas had given me their names. They were the Señors Olla-Podrida, Bolero, Fandango, the Admiral de los Eeser-Stopper, and General Juan Grimfez. All patriots to the core, as Cottonadas put it, though of different opinions. Olla Podrida professed republican sympathies, Bolero was for the King who liked music and gardening, Fandango went in for Carolism, De los Eeser-Stopper had manœuvred for the frugal Duke of Nondépensier; General Juan Grimfez kept his proclivities a secret in his own bosom. This much, however, Cottonadas could assure me, that whatever might have been the past

ambitions of these gentlemen, they had all and for ever put away their differences at the first mention of my name. The high reputation I had acquired in the state councils of Europe by my wise rule in Pumpernickel, had convinced them that upon me, and me alone, depended the future welfare of Tobago. I had nothing to apprehend in the way of a revulsion of feeling. "Worth is worth," observed the plenipotentiary: "when men have discovered a pearl of price they dismiss all yearning after baser pebbles." I thought this remarkably proper language on the part of Cottonadas: he meant me by the pearl.

The General Grimfez I recognized at once from having seen his photograph so often in shop-windows, along with that of Quickmarch and other Prime Ministers—for Grimfez was the Prime Minister. A shrewd sharp man, as Cottonadas told me, and descended in collateral line from that great hero of the middle ages, Don Quijote de la Mancha. I could not help frowning, however, when the plenipotentiary reminded me that it was this General who had been mainly instrumental in expelling the late sovereign, and further that, previously to becoming what he then was, he had been oftentimes in hot water as a radical, and even sentenced to be hanged. But Lotty whispered that if General Grimfez had not expelled the late sovereign he would never have been in a position to offer me the crown—a remark, the correctness of which struck me. Kopperpfennig also observed that unless a man set up for a radical, he had no chance of becoming Prime Minister, as it was only by promising men more than you ever intended to give that you could hope to win their confidence. I noticed that Cottonadas smiled and offered a pinch of snuff to Kopperpfennig.

But I have left the Provisional Government in the act of doing homage. They were most polite and becoming in their salutations. General Grimfez (he was one of the muffled Tobagians at the station, and the same who gave his arm to Lotty) bowed almost to the ground, thanked me in the name of the entire nation of Tobago for the honour I was conferring upon the land, and assured me that the heart of every true Tobagian was linked by bonds of amity to Pumpernickel. There were similar declarations from the four others, and then we all took our seats round the table, where chocolate and cakes were soon brought up, Lotty having acknowledged that she was hungry. It was not without some little rummaging that a chair could be found for Kopperpfennig; and I fancied I could detect that General Grimfez did not look with the eye of fraternity upon my chief adviser. I even heard him whisper darkly that the climate of Tobago had been found particularly insalubrious for fat men. Kopperpfennig, as it happened, weighed sixteen stone three.

Our business round the table was simple, and required little time. First, I had to take the oaths, and General Grimfez offered to read me the Constitution; but I answered him I would spare him the trouble, being prepared to swear anything he pleased without delay. Kopperpfennig expressed his readiness to swear too; but was told somewhat dryly

that his allegiance could be dispensed with. Lotty's oath, however, was accepted with readiness ; and both the General, the Admiral, and the three Señors murmured something pretty when she drew off her glove and held up her small hand to vow that never, on any account, would she interfere with the liberties of the Tobagians. Next came the discussion about convoking the Cortes. Grimfez assured me that he could depend upon them—that is, on sufficient of their number to constitute a majority ; and as for the rest, he added, they will come round to your Majesty fast enough by-and-by, when once you are on the throne. There remained, then, but this one question, as to what was to be done in case of any temporary resistance in the towns. Grimfez remarked that in every large city there were men whose minds were rebellious to all authority, and strangers to decency ; persons who had no respect for kingship in their degraded souls—and yet he hesitated, and would like to do nothing without my authority. I understood what he meant, assured him warmly that I placed the utmost confidence in him, and gave him *carte blanche* to shoot as many Tobagians as he should find necessary. Altogether, it was a very snug little family-party. There prevailed the most cordial desire to make things pleasant all round ; and I was greatly impressed not only by the unanimity of the five Ministers, but by the almost brotherly affection they appeared to entertain towards one another. When Señor Fandango, the quondam Carolist, expressed a hope that I would prove a bulwark to the Church, all his colleagues exclaimed that this was a most proper wish, and trusted likewise that I would prove a bulwark to the Church ; when Señor Bolero, the once partisan of the King who loved music and gardening, appealed to my consideration on behalf of horticulture and the fine arts, not one of the remaining four but repeated that music and gardening were inseparable from the glory of Tobago. They were perpetually paying each other compliments, smiling to one another across the table, making themselves small so as not to incommodate one another's elbows, and referring to each other as "my very dear colleague." In a word, their harmony was extremely touching, and gave me the highest possible opinion of the Tobagian character.

But the interview was not intended to be prolonged so as to tire us. After a short hour's conference the five Ministers rose, along with Cotonadas the plenipotentiary, and begged leave to withdraw, so that we might do honour to the more substantial supper which would shortly be sent up, and take the rest we required after our fatiguing journey. Grimfez prayed that we would bide patient and remain in the house where we were just for a few days only, until the Parliament had been convoked and gone through the formality of electing me ; "after which, sire," he added, "there will be nothing but plain sailing, straight ahead, bows foremost." Kopperpfennig here intimated his wish to remain in our company after the others had withdrawn, and share the supper ; but he was told that the Ministers were anxious for the honour of showing him the way to his own apartments, which were situated in another part of the house, and where he would find

supper ready laid for him. As he still insisted, the General and the Admiral took hold of him, each by an arm, declaring that his health was precious to the state of Pumpernickel, that his eyes were already red from want of sleep, and that they would not hear of his foregoing the repose to which he was justly entitled. Flattered, but over-matched, Kopperpfennig was marched out; and the Ministers having all wished us a good night, Lotty and I were left alone.

V.

Shortly afterwards up came the supper, and whilst discussing it, Lotty and I talked with enthusiasm of the events of the few preceding days.

"Dear me! how well everything has gone off!" she said, smiling. "How amiable they all are; what fine teeth that General Grimfez has; and that Señor Fandango, if it were not for that wig of his, I should declare he looks scarcely thirty."

"Only to think," I responded, "that a week ago I had no more idea of becoming King of Tobago than of flying. Ah! that Quickmarch, how blank he will look when he hears of this. But I'll pay him out, Lotty, you'll see."

"Oh, never mind Quickmarch, dear," said Lotty; "he's beneath our notice. You'll humiliate him by sending the order of the Silver Sheep's Tail of Tobago to all the other Prime Ministers, but not to him."

"Yes, and I'll refuse to recognize officially the existence of Schinkenhausen; I'll have no diplomatic relations with him; that will teach him to take a mean advantage of my misfortunes."

Lotty was probably going to say something in reply, when, just as she was opening her lips:—*tock!* there was a sudden noise as of a pebble thrown against the window-pane.

"Hallo, what's that?" I said; and the words were scarcely out of my mouth before a second and third *tock-tock*, followed up the first.

I let drop my knife and fork; Lotty rose in haste from her seat and ran to the opposite end of the room. *Tock-tock*, came a fifth and sixth pebble. "It must be the Revolution," I muttered, aghast; and yet, impelled by an irresistible feeling, I crept to the window and looked out. It was a moonlight night, and I could discern the figure of an individual clad in slouched hat and mantle, gesticulating on the gravel-path in the garden below. Upon perceiving me he lifted his wideawake so as to show his features. I recognized the General Grimfez!

"Dear me! Don't be alarmed, Lotty," I exclaimed; "it's the General. Bless my soul, how strange!" and I opened the window.

"Hush!" exclaimed the General, laying a finger on his lips. "I've something of importance to say to you. Don't speak; fasten this to the railing of your balcony, and I'll come up." So saying he flung me the end of a cord, to which a rope-ladder was attached. I drew up the ladder

and fastened it as requested. In half a dozen strides he had scaled the height and stood by me. The ladder was drawn up after him. He stepped out of the balcony into the room with me ; hastily closed the window, ran and locked the doors ; and then, returning, with his finger still pressed mysteriously on his lips, repeated : "Hush ! speak low ; the others think I am in bed ; they must know nothing of this. Sire, I come to prove myself your friend, to warn you against serious dangers—"

He rolled his eyes horribly. Lotty gave a scream.

"Hush ! madam, silence as you value your throne," he gasped, ominously. "Listen, sire : time presses. My colleagues exercise a vigilant surveillance over me to prevent my speaking with you in private. They know I am devoted to your interests, as this step of mine sufficiently testifies. Sire, you are surrounded by enemies. Those colleagues whom you saw an hour ago round that table—all enemies. Olla-Podrida's an enemy, so's Fandango, so's De los Eeser-Stopper. They have pretended to favour your pretensions to the throne, only the better to serve their own ends. Each of them hopes to get you into his power when you are crowned, and, abusing your confidence, to overthrow you so as to make way for the candidates whose cause each is privately serving. Fandango relies on the clergy to help him, De los Eeser-Stopper puts his trust in the navy and the shopkeepers, the latter of whom have been partisans of Nondépensier ; Bolero would suscitate against you foreign foes from Portovino ; Olla-Podrida recruits his supporters from amongst the advocates of the guillotine—"

Lotty gave another scream.

"Oh ! let us go away from here," she cried, springing up and clasping her hands. "I knew this would happen ; I always told you to have nothing to do with the crown of Tobago."

General Grimfez quickly interposed :

"Hush, madam ! there's a way out of the danger ; rely on me and I will save you. Sire, you may yet have a long and glorious reign if you closely follow my advice. In a few days you will be proclaimed king. Once on the throne confirm me in my present post of Prime Minister, but dismiss all my colleagues. Let not one of them be ever admitted to hold any office, be it ever so small in the state. Nay, sire, go the whole length, show you are king and devoted to the welfare of Tobago—expel them all from the country—"

He broke off short, for precisely at this juncture came another series of *tocks* against the window-panes. *Tock—tock—tock*. "Sire, it's one of them," muttered Grimfez, with bated breath. "Didn't I tell you they were all your enemies ! Stay, give me time to hide somewhere. There, in the chimney—no ; this will do : the tablecloth's long, it touches the ground—" And he ducked under the table.

Peering out of the window I saw a new wideawake and cloak ; this time Señor Fandango's. The window being opened, there was a repeti-

tion of the same words and same performance as before. "Hush, sire! don't speak; fasten this to the balcony," &c.; and in another few seconds up came Señor Fandango, the ex-Carolist.

"Hush, sire!" was his first solemn exclamation, after he had assured himself, like his forerunner, that the doors were closed. "The others think I am in bed; they must know nothing of this. Sire, I have come to prove myself your friend; to warn you against impending dangers. Your Majesty has treacherous enemies in the persons of all my colleagues, but chiefly of Grimfez, the sworn foe of the Church and of all morality. If Grimfez knew of this step I am taking he would be capable of dooming me to a miserable death. I know him, sire; what he is aiming at is to get you into his power, and when the whole land is lulled into fictitious security by your accession, to precipitate you suddenly from the throne, and to seat himself in your place."

"Oh! do let us go away; I warned you of all this beforehand; if you'd only taken my advice you would never have set foot in Tobago," repeated Lotty, miserably.

"Hush! madam, there's a way out of the danger," resumed Señor Fandango, in a hollow voice; "rely on me and I will save you. Sire, your reign may yet be a brilliant and prosperous one if you place yourself unreservedly in my hands. I am the representative of the illustrious Society of Jesuits. In a few days you will be King of Tobago. Once elected, call me to the post of Prime Minister, at present occupied by Grimfez, and suffer me to banish all my colleagues from the land. As for Grimfez, sire, inaugurate your reign by a noble act, and hand him over to the Inquisition, which we will re-establish between us."

He paused for a reply. I was faltering, perplexed as to what to say, when *crash!* a pebble launched sharply from below, sent one of the panes shivering into pieces. Señor Fandango bounded up with his hair on end: "Santo Lorenzo! that must be Grimfez. If he catches me here I am lost. Sire, see by what dangers you are surrounded. Stay, let me conceal myself somewhere. Here, this will do—under the table, the table-cloth almost touches the ground—"

"No, not there," shrieked Lotty, seizing him by the coat-tails; "there's a dog underneath—in the chimney."

Señor Fandango made but one bound towards the chimney, buttressed himself with knees and hands against the sooty walls, and disappeared up the flue. "Send him away quickly," he groaned in terror; "for I shan't be able to hold on here long."

The new comer was the Admiral de los Eseser-Stopper. He had no ladder, but only a rope, which he fastened to the railing, and by which he swarmed up hand over hand. "Hush, sire!" were his first words. "The others think I am in bed; they must know nothing of this. You're surrounded by enemies; but I'm a plain-spoken man, and I've come to give you a piece of advice. In a few days you'll have the crown on your head; all you've got to do is to make me Prime Minister. . . ."

It was unfortunate that Señor Fandango should have chosen the chimney for his refuge: for the flue being narrow and straight, he was unable to obtain a purchase there, and so selected this moment for letting go his hold, and rolling with a mighty noise, all black, scared, and crest-fallen, on to the hearthrug. His descent was so sudden that the Admiral gave a formidable jump and reeled against the table, causing it to lurch under his weight, to totter, finally to fall with an unearthly crash of broken plate, and reveal underneath the figure of Don Juan Grimfez in all his glory.

The three noble colleagues stood face to face.

Tableau.

VI.

I have no cause to explain further why it was that Lotty and I crossed the frontier early the next morning, and why I have since determinedly set my face against having any relations whatever with Tobago. How the Provisional Government settled matters between them after my departure I care not to inquire; but it is presumable they abused me and made it up, for I perceive they have lately addressed themselves to another of my Teuton cousins,—a friend of Quickmarch's,—thereby involving themselves in complications, and once more affording my ally, the Emperor of the Gauls, an opportunity of explaining his ideas as to neutrality. The long and short of it is, they have not yet got a sovereign. On taking up a Tobagan gazette this very day, I found still figuring there the familiar advertisement which has headed the second column of the first page for the last twenty months—advertisement beginning: **WANTED, A KING.**

Lotty says she wishes my successor joy.

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